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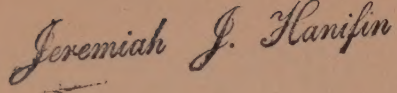
Jeremiah J. Hanifin

BY

LADISLAS REYMONT

THE PEASANTS

AUTUMN

WINTER

SPRING

SUMMER

THE PROMISED LAND

TRANSLATED
FROM THE POLISH OF
LADISLAS REYMONT
BY
M. H. DZIEWICKI

VOLUME TWO

NEW YORK
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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE PROMISED LAND

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CHAPTER I

HIT you on the back!—Now on the chest!—Now on the head!—And once more!—And once again, my dear sir!"

"Why, Father," old Mr. Boroviecki observed, not without vexation, "you lay about you with the cards as if they were a flail!"

"That," Mr. Zayonchkoski put in, "reminds me of an incident that took place at the Migurskis'; district of Sieradz——"

"Flail or no flail," the priest interrupted, his eyes twinkling with merriment, "I certainly have first-rate trumps, my dear sir. And I have a pretty little queen besides to take your king with, Zayonchkoski!"

"That remains to be seen.—But your reverence has a disagreeable knack of interrupting.—Well, as I was saying, at the Migurskis'——"

"No matter where, we have heard that anecdote a hundred times at least. Have we not, Mr. Adam?" he added, turning to old Mr. Boroviecki.

"Why, why will you always make remarks of the sort?—As I love the Lord, too much is too much!" He threw his cards down on the table, and started to his feet, much offended. "Tomek!" he cried through the open window, and his powerful bass filled the yard; "put my horse to!"

He pulled hard at his moustache, which was dyed a deep black, and snorted angrily.

"Now, now, just look at the man! What a fire-brand he is! I make him a friendly remark, and out he flies at me with a hullabaloo—as if I were a farm-hand of his!—Yasyek, my pipe is out."

"Sit down, neighbour," said Mr. Adam Boroviecki; "Mr. Baum is about to deal."

"I won't. I am going home. I have enough of his reverence's sermons. Yesterday, at the Zavadzkis', I said a few words on the political situation; and he publicly contradicted me—jeered at me," the old gentleman said, grumbling and striding about the room.

"Because you, my dear sir, were talking absolute nonsense. —Yasyek, a light here! my pipe is out."

Here Zayonchkoski flew into a passion. "What? I talk nonsense?" he shouted, advancing upon the priest.

"That's it; nonsense," came the answer, in very gentle tones, while his reverence was puffing at a long, long pipe which a little boy was kneeling on the floor to light.

"Lord have mercy on us!" cried Zayonchkoski in high dudgeon, stretching out his arms.

"Your reverence's turn to call," said Max, pushing the cards towards him.

"Seven of spades," he called.

"Your call now, Zayonchkoski."

"Eight of clubs," he answered, coming quickly back to the table. The offence given by the priest, however, still rankled in his mind; and as he sat down, he remarked: "How can the masses have any idea of political matters, when their natural leaders are themselves so blind?"

"Eight of clubs; no trumps," said the priest.

"I accept.—Now your reverence shall see how the game will go. If you have no clubs, you shall smart for it, and soundly."

"However that may be, when Mr. Baum gets your clubs with his ace, where will you be?—Ah, my son, what did I say?—Never boast; never say *Amen* before *In sæcula sæculorum* has come, my dear sir. Ha ha!" He laughed long and loud at Zayonchkoski's discomfiture, and was so pleased that he drummed with his pipe on his cassock, and patted Max, who sat next to him, on the shoulder. "Hurrah for Lodz, hurrah for the manufacturers!" he cried; and then:

"A light here, Yasyek, you young will-o'-the-wisp! my pipe is out."

"Your reverence is quite a heathen, enjoying the misfortunes of others so!"

"Never trouble about that. You're down—and well down. —That man has been draining us dry this year; let him pay a few groschen now!"

"Twenty groschen a week was all I used to win: twenty groschen—upon my word!" Zayonchkoski said, leaning over the table to Max.

"The girls went forth for mushrooms,
For mushrooms, for mushrooms,"

old Mr. Boroviecki began to hum, beating time on the step of the arm-chair in which he sat and was carried everywhere, being paralysed on one side.

There was an interval of silence.

The candles at each corner of the green card-table shed a bright light on the field of conflict and the players' faces.

Zayonchkoski did not speak; he was still on bad terms with the parish priest, with whom he had squabbled twice a week for twenty years at least. He twirled his black-dyed moustache, and from under his great bushy eyebrows looked with peculiar disfavour at Max, who had just beaten him so badly.

The priest, whose ascetic face beamed with quaint kindliness, was bending over the table. At times he would puff at his pipe and blow a cloud all round him, and would then cast a keen glance at his adversaries' hands out of his bright black eyes, though he never took advantage of what he saw.

Max played with great concentration of mind and much care, for his adversaries were first-rate players at *"préférence"*; but in the intervals of the game he would often look out of the window into which the moon was peeping, or towards the adjoining apartments, where he could hear Anne talking with Boroviecki.

Mr. Adam was continually humming some tune, beating time to it, and passing his hand through his hair, now thinning, but still luxuriant. And at every new game he would call: "First-rate cards! I'll give it you now, my boys! The king and queen and all the court besides. On to the charge! Close in to the right! Forward!" he would command with great energy and a fiery face, and slap his cards down on the table, for all the world as if he were going to attack an enemy.

"I wish you would play in a Christian fashion," the priest said. "All those tunes of yours are nothing but soldiers' songs.—Ribaldry, my dear sir.—Yasyek, a light here, my pipe's out."

"Those words 'Close in' remind me of a very curious occurrence at——"

"At the Migurskis', in the district of Sieradz. My dear sir, we have heard, we have heard that one too before."

Zayonchkoski darted a look of displeasure at the priest's smiling face. But he said nothing, only averted his face and went on playing.

Max dealt the cards out once more; but after each had called, he went round to Charles.

"Yasyek," said the priest, "do open the window, God's birds are singing so sweetly outside!"

The boy opened it, and the room was flooded with the voices of many nightingales, singing all together, and with billows of fragrance from the lilacs that blossomed just by.

In the room which Max now entered there was no lamp; only the light of the moon, gliding slowly athwart the dark-blue background of the sky.

They were sitting in silence.

"We've a fine collection of fossils there," Charles whispered to Max; for a storm had again broken the players' harmony, and Zayonchkoski was once more at the window, ordering his horses to be put to immediately, while old Mr. Boroviecki sang at the top of his voice:

"Though we're hungry and freeze,
Yet we live at our ease."

"Do they often play together?"

"Every week. At least twice a week they have some squabble, and even go off without leave-taking! But they are the very best of friends for all that!"

"But you, Miss Anne, have to reconcile them sometimes?"

"No, never! I tried once, and his reverence went very red and shouted: 'Young lady, you'll please see to the milking of the cows!' No, they can't live apart, though they must squabble when together."

"But," Max queried, "what on earth will your father do without them in Lodz?"

"That I do not know," said Charles, "nor do I know either why he wants to live in Lodz at all."

"Don't you know?" Anne ejaculated in surprise, and would have said more, but for the sound of a bell at the wicket-gate.

She returned bearing a wire for Charles. Without reading it all through, he crumpled it up in disgust and thrust it into his pocket.

She was afraid of some bad tidings, and said so.

"A stupid telegram, and nothing else." He waved his hand, vexed both by the sympathy and the curiosity she showed. The wire had been sent by Lucy!

"Do you feel very much bored here, Mr. Baum?" Anne inquired.

"I shall not say one word in answer to such a question. What I do say is that I am in admiration at the life you lead. I had never imagined that life could anywhere be so wonderfully peaceful, so wonderfully simple, and at the same time so very noble as it is here. It is only here, amongst you, that I realize how little I knew the Poles till now; only here can I account for many of Charles's good points. It's a pity you're going to Lodz!"

"But why?"

"Because I shall not be able to come here any more."

"And will you not come and see us in Lodz?" she asked, under her breath, fearing lest he might be unwilling. The

fear made her heart beat quicker, but she could not tell why.

"Many thanks. I may take this for an invitation, may I not?"

"You may. But you will first have to make me acquainted with your mother."

"I am at your orders."

"Now I have to leave you; I must see to the supper."

She went into the next room, where Yagna was laying the cloth.

Max paced the room to have a look at Anne whenever he passed by the door left ajar. He was struck by her graceful, slender figure, bending over the table; by her features, which, though not classically regular, were glowing with a peculiar fascination; and by that wide forehead which crowned them, and was itself crowned with a mass of auburn hair, smoothly parted down the middle. Her eyes, of a greyish blue, beamed bright and serene—though not without a dash of sternness—from beneath jet-black brows.

Max felt strongly interested in her; so much so that he almost thought Charles's presence unwelcome when he came in.

"I must be off to Lodz by to-morrow evening," Boroviecki said curtly.

"Why in such haste? Our working people have three holidays; we can spend Whitsuntide here accordingly."

"If you enjoy the place, please yourself by all means. I have to go."

"In that case," Max muttered, seating himself on the window-sill, "we go together."

He had felt so happy here that he was amazed at himself; and now this man wanted to tear him away! He eyed Charles with gloomy resentment.

"I have," Charles explained, "much pressing business," and he added: "besides having quite enough of the country—and a little over, too," pacing the room in a turmoil of thought. Then he walked into the room where the card-players were, and exchanged a few commonplaces with Anne;

but he could not conceal how uneasy and nervous he felt. Nor how weary.

Moreover, there was that telegram from Lucy, which he could not think of without apprehension. She had declared in the clearest possible manner that, should he not turn up on Tuesday, she would set out to seek him, were he even at the house of his betrothed! And then—come what might—it mattered not! Now he knew that Lucy, maddened with passion, would keep her word; and he had to go. This entanglement with her had grown so hateful to him, he so detested her very beauty and the love-fetters she had bound him with, that life itself had now become a burden.

Then—there was Anne. He knew he did not care for her. At times even, meeting her clear, trustful eyes, he distinctly felt dislike. Yet he was obliged to feign love; to soften the tones of his voice, when curses were in his throat, ready to fly out; and to be pleasant, soft-spoken, smiling, and attentive, as a fiancé ought to be. He had an inexpressible repugnance for such a part, yet he had to play it, for his father's sake, for hers, and also for his own: by converting Anne's dowry to his own use he had tied himself to her for ever.

"I'll marry her in double-quick time, and so make an end of it," he reflected. "Are there so few loveless marriages?"

But he raged inwardly to think that by marrying her he should inevitably rank as a nobody in the financial world. He would be compelled, if he wished to have anything of his own at all, to toil hard for years, to urge machinery and men to the very utmost—employ every means to squeeze out something for himself.—And that *now!* Now that old Müller had told him almost in as many words that he should have Mada, together with the management of the factory—a fortune of a million on the spot—a great financial opening at once, and the possibility of a far greater one in the future!

For some time already he had been disgusted with paltry and petty money-making; even the factory he was planning now seemed paltry in his eyes, though he had been working

at it all spring. He was tired of all those infinitesimal savings and scrapings, which came to only a few hundred roubles. For so many a year he had been hard at work, constantly struggling and slaving for every rouble he put by; for so many years he had crushed down all wishes and desires and cravings of every nature that his means did not permit him to satisfy; for so many a year he had longed for a broader life—a life of independence! And now, when, by marrying Mada, he might have gained all that—he was forced to take Anne, and by that very fact take upon him the yoke of mediocrity!

Against this consummation he revolted with all his might.

When Anne came to ask him in to supper, he merely glowered at her, followed without a word, and pushed his father's arm-chair into the dining-room.

The talk at supper was very lively indeed; for the priest —Father Simon—and Zayonchkoski were soon quarrelling about politics, and both the Borovieckis presently took up the cudgels in their turn. Charles jeered mercilessly at Zayonchkoski's views on the political situation; he sneered, too, at the priest's optimistic standpoint, and flatly contradicted his father by saying that political questions were not decided now by force of arms, but by "reasons of State."

"Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta!" his father exclaimed peevishly, mimicking his son's voice. "Don't tell me! I can always show you that whoever has most artillery and soldiers is in the right. For an empire, reason is nothing but its having a big army ready to take the field. That is the soul which gives life to every State."

"No, Mr. Adam," the priest said, "the soul of an empire consists in the justice with which it is ruled."

"Empires are ruled by the stomach and its cravings," said Charles, on purpose to spite the priest, who took up the proposition and set about arguing that, as God's will is supreme, and His will is justice, all things must be founded on justice alone.

Charles held his peace for a time, not caring for such barren disputes; but when his father and Zayonchkoski besides

joined the priest in maintaining that everything must take place according to God's will, he could bear it no longer, and gave vent to his spleen: "Gentlemen, you explain the world by the Catechism. It is an easy method, I confess, and at times a clever one too."

"You are blaspheming, my dear sir; you are blaspheming God, and insulting us.—Yasyek! you young limb! a light here! my pipe is out," he cried in a voice that shook with indignation, and was so upset that his pipe clattered down upon the floor.

"Miss Anne, will you not regret leaving the paradise you have created here at Kurov?" Max was saying to Anne in a low voice. Neither of them had taken any part in the general conversation, Max feeling no interest in the questions raised, whilst Anne was considerably depressed.

Charles was changed to her; she had noticed it during these last few days. He shunned her so that she was gripped to the heart with vague uneasiness. She did not reply to the question Max had put, but sat bending over the table, and whispering with downcast eyes: "Do you know whether anything has gone wrong with Charles?"

"Why, no. Have you noticed anything?"

"He seemed to me—— But indeed I had forgotten how many worries he must have with his factory.—Yes, that's true," she added, as if speaking to herself, and resolved to stifle all her suspicions and disquietudes. She raised her head, and with eyes full of heart-felt care and solicitude gazed upon his clouded face and the supercilious glances which he darted in the direction of Father Simon.

"But what will you do with the land?" Max went on to ask.

"Grandfather wanted to sell it, but Charles was against that; for which I am very grateful to him. I have lived so much in this house that it would hurt to think it was ours no longer. Almost all the garden trees, all the quickset hedges, have been planted either by Charles's mother or by myself. Fancy, then, how hard it would be to give all this up and for ever!"

"Well, but you may purchase another estate, and a finer one, somewhere else."

"Yes, but it would not be Kurov."

Here they stopped. Another quarrel had broken out between Zayonchkoski and Father Simon, who was angrily striking the floor with his wooden pipe, and shouting: "My dear sir, I'll tell you this much: your name is Zayonchkoski—and your coat of arms—a sheepskin.—Yasyek! a light here!"

"O Lord! O Lord! Such an outrage!—Tomek, you scoundrel! get my carriage ready at once!" he roared into the kitchen, where his driver was at supper. Then out he rushed without taking leave of anyone, put on his dust-coat in the passage, and ran out. But he came back in a minute, having forgotten his cap somewhere, and looked for it in every room. Finding it, he dashed once more into the dining-room, struck a thundering blow on the table with his fist, and bawled: "You—you! Thank God your cloth protects you. Otherwise I'd teach you, I would, what comes of calling me 'Zayonchkoski with a sheepskin for coat of arms!' Oh yes, I'd teach you," he yelled, thumping again and again on the table.

"Do not spill our tea, my dear sir," Father Simon observed mildly.

"Pray sit down; why are you in such a rage? Sit down, then, do sit down," his host pleaded.

"I will not! I'll not set foot any more here, in a house where I have been insulted."

"Go, and God be with you; but do not spill our tea," the priest said, raising his tea, which was dancing up and down in his glass, in consequence of the thumping.

"You are—a—a Jesuit! As I love God you are!" Zayonchkoski screamed, and stalked out, with one last blow upon the table.

In the yard and even for some distance down the road his voice was to be heard, mingling with the clatter of the britzka as it rolled away.

"What a hare-brained fellow! Who ever heard of such a thing? To be so furious at the slightest word said!"

"Yes, but that word of yours touched him to the quick, Father."

"Why does he say silly things then?"

"Everyone has a right to his own opinion," said Mr. Adam.

"Provided," Charles drawled ironically, "provided it bears out our own."

"My dear sir! That madcap! He's really gone off!—Yasyek, you rogue, a light here," he cried indignantly, and went out on the porch to look for Zayonchkoski.

"See what a fire-brand he is! Yelled—railed at me—and ran off! The bad animal!"

"He'll come back," Anne said. "It's not the first time it has happened, nor will it be the last."

"Come back, will he? H'm, but what will Mr. Baum here be thinking of us?"

"He will be thinking," Charles replied caustically, "that you gentlemen sleep well, eat well, and have plenty of leisure, since you spend it in such childish squabbles."

The priest glared at him ominously for an instant, then smoothed his brow and smiled again; he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stuffed tobacco into it, and gave it to Yasyek to light, saying: "Your teeth hurt you, my dear sir: foul weather is at hand."

Shortly after, he took his leave and went home.

There was a long silence. Old Mr. Adam was dozing in his arm-chair. Anne was helping the servant to clear the table. Charles settled himself in a huge easy-chair, smoking cigarettes, and looking with amusement at Max, who followed each of Anne's motions with wistful eyes.

They soon afterwards went to rest. Max had his bed in a tiny parlour that looked out upon the garden.

It was a wonderful night. The songs of the nightingales were waxing ever more and more plaintive; and at last, from the thickets that grew about the river, the blackbirds began

to answer. There was nothing in the world so beautiful as the rain of sweet sounds which poured down in that quiet enchanted night of June, full of the heat striking upwards from the sun-kissed soil—of the stars twinkling in heaven—of the perfume of lilac-bushes standing in clumps all about the casements.

Max could not sleep. He opened his window and looked out upon the world wrapped in haze. He was lost in thoughts of Anne, when on a sudden he heard her voice, sounding very low.

Leaning out of the window, he could perceive her sitting by the casement of her room, which was in one of the office buildings which stood at right angles to the main pavilion.

"And why will you not tell me what makes you suffer?"

"It's nothing but overstrung nerves," another voice replied.

"Stay here a day or two more; you will calm down."

The answer was inaudible. Then the first voice spoke again, but so softly that Max could not distinguish anything; he only heard distinctly the choir of frogs croaking in the meadows, the rumble of carts passing along the highway, and the songs, ever louder, of the birds that sang.

The moon shone so bright that it covered the dewy leaves as with a crust of silver, and turned the whorls of haze into tissues of silvery gauze.

"You are romantic," said a man's voice in peevish tones.

"Am I romantic because I love you? because I feel in my heart every one of your cares so deeply—more deeply still than my own—and wish you to be perfectly happy?"

"No, no, not because of that; but because you think nothing of exposing yourself to catch cold in the night air by talking to me through the open window, provided it be by moonlight, and to the accompaniment of song-birds."

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night, Anne."

The window was slammed, and a white curtain hid the room, which now was lit. Charles had not left his window, for Max heard a match struck and could see a thin thread of

blue smoke go curling up from his room, and hover about the thatch which formed the eaves of the roof. He was smoking a cigarette.

Max lit one too, but very silently, that he might not be found out as an eavesdropper. He wondered whether Anne would return to her window, and what they would say to one another if she did. His heart was swelling with indignation against Charles.

Anne's window, however, remained closed. He could see only that her shadow appeared from time to time on the curtain, and stood by the casement; and he might have made out the sound of her footsteps but for the warbling of the nightingales and the sighing of a breeze which had sprung up somewhere near, amid forests and marshes, and came creeping in over the corn, that stood in dense dark masses, floating on through the farm-house trees, rustling and shaking the lilac shrubs, dallying with the thatched roof and caressing Max's face with its moist, warm breath, saturated with the rich odour of cornfields.

The same voice as before was heard again, saying: "Karchmarek, the man who wanted to buy our farm, will be here to-morrow."

Max had been looking into the garden, and thus missed seeing the window open.

"But Father is not selling," Charles returned.

"Perhaps you may be in want of money, though."

"Indeed I may. Of a cool million," he rejoined with dry irony.

"At any rate, Karchmarek is to rent the land; he wants a holding for his son-in-law."

"We'll talk that over to-morrow."

"Shall you take our carriage-horses to Lodz, or sell them?"

"They're not worth taking: too old for anything."

"But Grandfather is so used to them."

"He must get over it. You are always so attached to such childish fancies! Why, you might just as well transplant half the garden to Lodz, or go there with cows and poultry, geese and sucking-pigs—the whole of your live stock!"

"If you think that sneers will prevent me from taking all I cannot do without, you make a mistake."

"Pray don't forget to take your family portraits as well —those senators of the old Polish Republic. Up in the garret here where they lie, they must be longing to be in Lodz," he went on, sarcastically.

The soprano voice was mute. But a faint sound arose which to Max's ear was just like the sobbing and the bubbling of a streamlet somewhere outside the garden.

"Anne, forgive me! I did not mean to pain you. You don't know in what a state my nerves are. Anne, forgive me, and don't cry!"

Max saw Charles jump down out of his window into the garden—and two white arms stretched out to him from Anne's casement. And their heads were close together.

He would neither look nor listen any more, but closed his window and laid himself down. Sleep fled him, however. He turned, tossed, swore, smoked cigarettes, but could not fall asleep for the loud singing of the nightingales in the lilac-bushes; and he fancied he could always hear those two voices ringing in his ear.

"What can they be saying for such a long time?" he wondered with increasing irritation, and rose from his bed to ascertain whether they still were there.

Charles stood beneath Anne's window, but the talk went on in such low tones that he could not catch a word.

"A fellow can't get a wink of sleep, and all on account of these philanderers!" he grumbled, and slammed his window with a loud noise.

Nevertheless, insomnia was to be his portion all that night of June, that simmered with the full rich life of spring.

The moon, hanging opposite the windows of the house, filled his room as with a bluish dust, and poured streams of gentle brightness over the wide stretch of rippling cornfields and the translucent mists above them, that hung motionless in the air. From the meadows and the deep morasses hard by, whitish vapours came up like puffs of smoke from a burning censer, which rose in trailing wavy masses towards

the dark azure sky overhead. And in those mists, hovering over the cornfields, and in the undulating and drowsily murmuring corn, there swelled forth the quavering, incessant blatter of field-crickets, with myriads of shrill rhythmical notes, and the frogs' deep croaking uttered in response.

All these paused for a short time; but only for Max to hear choirs of other voices, sounding from the far-off morasses, from pools covered with weeds, from shiny watery mirrors, into which the rays of the moon darted like golden blades; and from the banks of tiny rivulets quite overgrown with sweet-flags or ditches full of yellow marsh-marigolds and sapphire-blue forget-me-nots, over which old decaying willows waved their heads, luxuriantly covered with a dense fell of young shoots. In every clump of lilacs the nightingales were singing; birds' voices in thousands joined their choir; and at times, from a tall larch-tree, towering above the manor, the klek-klek-klek of the stork would resound. All this mingled with the plaintive cries of lapwings from a quagmire, the twittering of swallows in their nests, the metallic rustling of the corn, the drone of beetles pursuing one another amongst the trees, the lowing of kine in their byres, and the distant whinnying of horses left in the paddocks for the night.

And sometimes the whole world would be still, and a great hush would fall over it: so deep, so immense, that one might almost hear the dew dropping from leaf to leaf, and the ripple of the brook beyond the manor seemed like the deep breathing of the earth itself!

These short moments ended, all the voices started again, and louder. Trees and grasses and all creatures would join in a thrilling hymn of love; they stretched out branches and shoots and flowers to one another, each offering itself to the other in a transport of passionate love. The whole earth, in all its voices—songs, cadences, whispers—in the veins of all plants and of all creatures whatsoever, in every twinkle or glimmer or gleam, in every one of the scents that filled the air —seemed revolving, a gigantic whirlpool that was nothing but desire for love; while, enraptured by the frenzy born of this

spring night, and by the devouring aspiration towards things everlasting, it dashed blindly on into the embrace of what opened wide before it on every side—dark, though shining with the chilly dews of the stars, suns, and planets by thousands of millions—dark, silent, mysterious, terrible!

No, Max could not sleep. The nightingale that sang under his window thrilled him so intensely that he tried to frighten it away; but the bird did not hear. Perched upon a twig that bent to and fro under its weight, it continued to pour forth its marvellous trills, shedding round it streams of perfect melody, and scattering pearly notes that rolled across the garden—a cascade of ineffable enchantment; while its female, sitting somewhere in the depths of the tree, would answer now and then with a dull drowsy twitter.

"Damn your devilish noise!" Max cried in a rage, throwing a boot of his into the bush. The bird went into another bush to go on with its song; but when Max closed the window and got into bed, it went back and sang just as before; which infuriated him so that he turned his face to the wall, wrapped his head up in the bed-clothes, and fell asleep at last, when the day was breaking.

But that night no one at the Manor of Kurov rested at all well, with the exception of old Mr. Adam.

Anne in particular had not by any means been set at ease by her long talk with her intended. On the contrary, she now began to suspect vaguely that he was concealing something from her; but never for an instant did she dream it was his indifference he concealed, or that he was trying his hardest to feign love. Being herself as passionately in love as a girl of twenty can be, such a suspicion never entered her mind.

Another cause of her sleeplessness was her waking dreams —dreams of the life in Lodz, that was to be in the near future; dreams of having to quit Kurov, where she had lived for so many a year.

"What shall I do there?" she thought, and went on thinking, thinking, thinking—till her thoughts were driven away by the noises in the farm-yard, half roused from its slum-

bers, by the cows driven out to graze and the cackling of the geese.

She got up at once.

Mr. Adam was already going to and fro in his movable arm-chair, pushed along by a lad; he moved about the yard, whistled to the pigeons that came flapping their wings over him in a noisy aerial band, snatching at the peas he was wont to throw to them every day.

"Valek! to the garden!" he ordered the lad, and flapped the pigeons away with his hat, for they came following, wheeling above and settling on his arm-chair as it moved.

"Look alive there, you sluggard!" he cried.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir!" the lad replied sleepily, pushing the vehicle into the garden amid rows of apple-trees blossoming so luxuriantly that they stood out on the green grass like gigantic hayrick-sized nosegays covered all over with rosy specks, and a cloud of rusty-brown bees flying from blossom to blossom. There were golden orioles singing in the cherry-trees; and a stork sat in her nest, clacking as loud as she could, with her neck drawn far back between her shoulders.

Anne remained in the entrance, sitting on a low stool, surrounded by a lot of poultry she was feeding. Max, in the doorway, stood contemplating the idyllic scene before his eyes.

"Tash—tash-tash-tashy!" she would call to a brood of ducklings fluttering joyfully in a tiny pool, and paying no heed to the despairing cries and cacklings of the hen that had hatched them out.

The poor mother-hen cried and clamoured for help, and rushed forward herself as far as the water, but shrank back again in terror.

"Miss Anne, do you feed all the poultry by yourself every day?"

"Every day."

"And what for?"

"Why, to fatten them up well, and get a good price for them in Lodz.—This is not very much to your taste, is it?"

"Very much indeed, for I see how admirably practical you are."

"Practical? I have to be."

"Few of us would be, unless forced. But you manage so well to combine good housewifery with things of quite another sphere—something I—I can find no name for——"

His stammering explanation was cut short at that moment. Old Mr. Boroviecki uttered a loud whistle, long drawn out. All at once the turkeys fell a-gobbling in great perturbation; the geese set up a harsh angry clamour; the mother-hens called their chickens to take shelter beneath their wings, stretching out their legs and cackling as they do when a hawk is at hand; the pigeons flew in panic to hide in the dove-cot, or fled to the stables, or (some of them) within the porch. They all raised such a din, and the uproar and confusion were so extreme, that old Mr. Boroviecki held his sides with laughter, shouting: "Oh what a trick I have played them all!"

"Here's an Idyll of the Geese, if you please! They have quite robbed me of my morning's sleep," Charles exclaimed as he came out into the porch.

"Oh, you'll sleep quite enough in Lodz."

"In Lodz I shall have other work to do," he answered impatiently; he bade Anne a somewhat frigid good-morning, and looked languidly at the blue smoke rising from the little township near by.

"Must you positively leave us to-day?" Anne hesitatingly inquired.

"Positively; and at once, if possible."

"Then let's be off; I'm ready," Max chimed in, who did not like the tone Charles was taking.

"No, no. You will leave us in the afternoon. I can't let you go at so short a notice. We must hear high mass at church, and then call on Father Simon. Then we shall take dinner, to which I have specially invited him and Mr. Zayonchkoski. Afterwards, Charles, you will have to settle the business with Kachmarek, who is to be here at three. We shall see you off before evening has come on."

"All right, all right!" Charles said, and went into the dining-room, where they all had breakfast. He then strolled out into the garden, and seated himself under an apple-tree in bloom, to be frequently rained on with showers of petals that fell at the slightest breeze.

Bees were humming in the branches as loud as in a hive, and all the garden was pervaded by the pleasant but heavy fragrance of lilacs and apple-blossoms, and the melodious lays of orioles.

Old Mr. Adam went to take a nap, as was his wont after breakfast, since he rose at dawn. Anne was dressing for church, and Max strolled about in the long grass of the avenues. He revolved round his friend in every direction, occasionally bending his steps towards the other wing of the manor, the farthest from the river; then he would come back, but not say a word to his friend as he passed him, nor would he so much as look at him. Then he would hurry away to the farther end of the garden, fancying that he saw the gleam of Anne's light-coloured dress. But it was only the flush of an apple-tree in bloom; so he came to a stand by the fence, to gaze afar at the wide plain of green growing corn, waving and murmuring monotonously, and at the narrow pathway in the middle, that ran from a village at some distance, and the long line of peasants, men and women, some in scarlet gowns, others in white capotes, all on their way to church. He looked, and at the same time listened with eager interest, hoping soon to hear the sound of Anne's voice.

What was the matter with him? He could not for the life of him guess. "Is it because I have had too little sleep?" he asked himself, as he pressed his aching forehead. "Deuce take the country!"

All at once his nerves got the upper hand of him so that he went straight to Charles. "Could we not start earlier?"

"Oh, then you too have had enough of it!"

"Indeed I am quite out of gear. I feel as if I were an old galosh, fit for the dustbin. Couldn't sleep all night, and don't know where to turn."

"Lie down upon the grass, my boy, and breathe the per-

fumes of the flowers, and listen to the murmur of the grasses in the wind; enjoy the warbling of the birds; bask in the sun at your ease—and let your fancy lightly turn at times to thoughts of—beer—or of your dark-browed Antka," was Charles's advice.

"I swear I don't know what to do with myself. I have looked round the garden a score of times; well, what of it? I see it's very lovely; the trees are all in full bloom, and the grass is very green; but what's all that to me? I've been in the meadows; very beautiful and all that. Been in the stables, been everywhere, seen everything—and am fed up. Miss Anne talked of the forest. I saw the trees were big, but all was so very damp, there was no sitting down."

"Why didn't you tell her? She would have had a sofa dragged out there for you!"

"And then I am uneasy about Mother. And——" Here he broke off and said no more, but sulkily kicked to pieces a mole-hill that had just been thrown up amongst the grass.

"Be comforted, we shall get away; but first I must perform my spell of drudgery to perfection."

"Drudgery?" Max asked him in surprise. "Is a visit to a father and a fiancée what you call drudgery?"

"Oh, I did not mean them, but the fools who will be here to dinner, and the calls I must pay," Charles answered quickly, to wipe out the impression produced by his words. But Max, as if on purpose to cross him, stoutly maintained that Zayonchkoski was a very genial fellow, and Father Simon a man of great intelligence, till at last Charles eyed him in utter amazement.

"What somersaults are you cutting now? Yesterday you were lost in admiration of the country. To-day you yawn and want to be back in Lodz. Yesterday you said those two men were mere comic-opera figures; to-day you stand up for them!"

"Because I choose to!" Max cried hotly, and was making for the bottom of the garden, but came back hurriedly on hearing Anne's voice from the porch:

"Time for church, gentlemen!"

His tired nerves, his vexation and weariness, were all forgotten in an instant, when he caught sight of Anne, who stood putting on a pair of long, white gloves.

She was exquisitely pretty that day in her cream-coloured dress, very thin, and adorned with extremely delicate mauve patterns; mauve, too, were her belt and collar, and she wore a large broad-brimmed hat, gay with forget-me-nots and white gauze. She was so strikingly handsome, and such an extraordinary fascination—youth, strength, nobility of character—flashed in her grey eyes, that Max was simply struck speechless, and had not a word to say to her.

For some time he walked on by her side. When he had to some extent recovered his self-possession, he eyed her dress with the air of an expert, and remarked gravely: "That's your 'brilliantine,' Charles; how admirably it colours!"

"And it washes just as admirably," Anne continued, with a smile of amusement.

He noticed the smile, and, feeling rather annoyed, walked on a little apart, looking down the main street which led to the church of the small town.

Its inhabitants were a wretched lot of people, Jewish weavers for the most part. There was a loom at almost every window; and in the long, muddy corridors there were sitting numbers of old Jewesses, winding yarn on spinning-wheels. The dry unchanging whir of the looms sounded from every casement, making the quiet sun-bathed air to quiver. A few miserable shops were open, but with the shutters half down, as if to keep out the dust in the street.

In the centre of the main thoroughfare was a great black pool of mud, that was never quite dry, in which troops of ducks were greedily devouring such food as they found.

Opposite the monastery, in the market-place (the top of a sandy hill, crowned all about with a circle of houses sustained on wooden pillars), several dwellings had lately been burnt down; nothing of them was left but the chimney-flues, upstanding out of heaps of ruined walls. The walls, too, which had environed the monastery, had crumbled away and were overgrown with weeds and bushes of ashen-grey privet,

close to which stood large birch-trees, with pendulous boughs and white bark. The façade of the church, from which the plaster had peeled off, was thus in full view, as also the tapering belfry at the corner of the churchyard.

Just by the church and in the very shadow of those birch-trees a good many britzkas and peasants' carts stood huddled together. A little farther, in the centre of the market-place, there were a few stalls and booths, with canvas coverings. Beyond these the place was quite empty on account of the burning sun.

The new-comers remained in the churchyard; it was not possible to enter the church for the crowd. Anne seated herself on the steps which led to the vestry, and said her prayers; Max and Charles went under the shadow of the ancient birch-trees, where they sat down on one of the old tombstones, of which a goodly number lay about in rows along the walls.

The service had begun. The muffled notes of the organ came from within through the open door. Sometimes the organist lifted up his voice, sometimes a full choir was heard in solemn harmony, sometimes the priest was faintly heard chanting beyond the sea of heads which pressed about the doors; the sound surged along the sanctuary gratings and rolled back mingled with sighs and prayers. At intervals everything became still as death, the tiny bells rang out with shrill tinklings, and all in the churchyard fell upon their knees, beat their breasts, and then again resumed the places where they had sat before.

"These kerchiefs were made by us," Max whispered, pointing to some women, glowing like poppies amid the sands and in the sunlight; squatting on their hams, they were telling their beads.

"But they are faded, see!" Charles rejoined, not without malice.

"Those faded ones are not from us. I am speaking of the crimson ones with green patterns. These never fade. You may boil them in full sunlight and they'll lose no brilliancy."

"Very good; but in what way does all this concern me?"

"Good day, gentlemen," a low voice said quite close to them.

Stanley Vilchek, with his tall hat on, elegantly dressed and strongly perfumed, stood at their side, and held out his hand to them as to old acquaintances.

"Why, what are you doing here in Kurov?" Max demanded.

"Come to see my family. It's my father who's just now pounding at the organ in there," he explained with scornful blandness, playing with several rings on his fingers.

"Are you here for long?"

"Going away to-night. My Jew wouldn't give me any longer leave."

"And where are you working now?"

"At Grosglik's office, but only for the present."

"Have you thrown up the coal business?"

"Oh no. I have my bureau in Nicholas Street. You see, Grosglik has made over his 'black' business to Kopelman, and I wouldn't stay with such a scurvy rogue.—But, gentleman, have you arranged yet for your factory's coal-supplies?" he asked in a lower voice, turning to Charles.

"No, not yet," Max replied.

"State your terms," Charles said coldly.

Vilchek sat down on the tombstone by his side, wrote out some figures quickly in his note-book, and put a written estimate into his hands.

"Too dear. Brauman offers at seven and a half kopeks cheaper per bushel."

"But to make up," Vilchek insinuated, "you will get ten bushels less per truck."

"And you imagine we shall not weigh the coal when we get it, do you?"

"As to mere weight, you may even get more. But it's not for nothing that Brauman waters the coal before sending it."

"He may. But how am I to know you will not do the same?"

"Very well; I'll offer you the same terms as Brauman

does. I shall make next to nothing by this, but I am anxious to have dealings with you. I spoke of it to Mr. Welt, who told me it was you who would decide.—Well, what do you say?" he asked, in a quite friendly way, totally ignoring the former words of Charles, and his haughty, contemptuous bearing.

"Come to us to-morrow, we shall talk the matter over."

"How much coal will you require, more or less?" he asked Max, but heard no answer.

Everybody was silent now. The great bells tolled solemnly, and—to their sounds and to the chants of the whole population—the procession came out of the church, and, uncoiling itself like a long serpent having for head the crimson canopy underneath which the priest was walking, left the shadows of the great trees. As with variegated red and yellow and white scales, it gleamed with the manifold attires of the women, rendered yet more motley by the men's black, Sunday capotes and the golden flickering of the tapers; and thus it glided along between the grey church walls and the verdure of the birch-trees, environing the ancient building as with a long girdle.

A multitude of voices sounded together in the hot June air, rising to the pale-blue sky; clouds of scared pigeons flew away from the steeple and the ruined monastery roofs, and circled aloft at a great height.

The procession re-entered the holy place, the voices were no longer discernible. All that was heard was the slumberous rustling of the birch-leaves, dangling in the sultry air outside, and the cackling of geese away among the monastery buildings; the church within was still vibrating to the chants, and the organ pealing, and the tiny bells.

"Do you know Kurov well?" Max asked of Vilchek, in order to turn the talk away from business; for Charles was obstinately taciturn, and eyed Vilchek with evident dislike.

"I was born here. Here I tended my father's geese and cattle; here I got my first taste of the rod—about which Father Simon may expatiate more fully.—Do you doubt

I ever tended cattle?" he queried ironically, seeing Max in a state of some confusion.

"Looking at you, I find that hard to believe."

"Ha ha! that's flattering. Yes, one has tended cattle, and tasted the rod, and blown the organ for Father, and cleaned the boots of the monks, and swept out, not only the church, but other places as well. I am not at all ashamed of it. It cannot be helped; facts remain facts. Besides, experience is capital laid out at compound interest."

Max was dumb. Charles looked the man superciliously up and down, with a slight curl of the lip; for he was attired with such exaggerated elegance as to be ridiculous. His glaring checked trousers, patent-leather boots, white silk waistcoat, bright-hued tie, with a very large diamond pin, cutaway in the height of fashion, lustrous stove-pipe hat, long gold watch-chain, gold eye-glasses, which he never wore, and the many costly rings he was always toying with—all this signally failed to harmonize with his tumid, pimply face, his beady, cunning little eyes, and his low, puckered forehead, above which hair of an indefinable colour covered the flat plain on the top of his head; while a long, sharp nose, thick, protruding lips, and jowl like that of an ugly dog made him resemble a poodle made up as a stork.

His companions' reticence did not trouble him at all, though at times, when he looked at the faces they made, he would smile a smile between pity and disdain. When the crowds began to disperse at the end of the service, and passed by him, he edged closer to Charles, drew up his squat, thickset figure, and eyed with lofty unconcern his fellow villagers and friends of the pastures, who gazed upon him in astonishment, and durst not so much as salute him.

Anne then came up. He bowed very low to her. She asked him to dinner, and he flushed with joy at the invitation, but declined it in a voice loud enough to be heard by all who were then passing: "I must dine at home: all my sisters are here to-day; a family meeting—I deeply regret I am compelled to forgo so great a pleasure.—Perhaps, however, at some future time——"

"We are now going to see Father Simon," Anne said.

"I'll accompany you. I too owe him a call."

They walked slowly through the churchyard, which was still full of people. Some groups of peasants in cotton cloth capotes, wearing flat, shiny caps, and of countrywomen in gaudy kerchiefs and petticoats, bowed to them low and respectfully. But the greater part of the people consisted of factory workmen, who had come to see their families at Whitsuntide. These stood unmoved and looked defiantly on the "manufacturers," as they called them. Though Charles knew by sight a good many workmen belonging formerly to his own department at Bucholc's, not a single hat was raised to him.

To Anne, on the other hand, many a woman came, either to kiss her hand, or grasp it with expressions of the best will.

Charles followed after her; the crowds shrank away from him as he approached. Max looked on curiously. Vilchek, who came last, addressed several men condescendingly: "How do?—Getting on well?" And he grasped the hands stretched out to him, and asked about their work, their children, their health.

Nearly all bowed; they looked upon him with favour and with pride. Had not this gentleman been known to them from the times when they had fought together and tended cattle? He was one of them.

"Why, they all know you," Max cried when they entered the priest's garden.

"They do," said Anne. "Yes, the whole township loves and honours Mr. Vilchek."

"And the net result of their love," he answered, "is that my light-coloured gloves are moist and dirty and quite spoiled on account of them." So saying, he pulled them off and flung them into some bushes with a lordly air.

"He'll pick them out again, when he goes home," Charles said in a subdued voice.

But Vilchek heard him and ground his teeth with intensity of hatred for the man.

CHAPTER II

STANLEY VILCHEK stretched himself lazily and went to look out of the window. Piotrovska Street was noisy as usual. The huge trucks, laden with goods, crunched along the pavements with such force that in all the offices the glass partition walls, strengthened by brass wire network and provided with many a wicket besieged by people waiting there on business, were clanking and vibrating incessantly.

His gaze took in mechanically, now the huge scaffolding in front of a house then building opposite, now the dense masses of foot-passengers, jostling each other on the sidewalks. Then he returned to his desk, taking first of all a bird's-eye view of the many faces squeezed close together outside between the wall and the glass partition, and kept apart, group from group, by other lower railings on the far side.

He settled down to write, while the office resounded with whispered conversations and occasional bursts of laughter at jokes which passed from one table to another, but were silenced at once when the front door slammed; with telephone calls, and with the jingling of glasses of tea that was made over a gas stove in one corner of the office.

"Silence, boys; the Old Man has come," a warning voice cried.

They were all silent directly, staring at Grosglik, who had come in his carriage and was in the doorway, talking with a Jew.

"Kugelman," said Vilchek, to the man at the neighbouring table, "ask for your leave now; the Old Man is in a good humour and will grant it."

"I asked him yesterday, and he said he would see when the accounts were audited."

"Mr. Steiman, ask for gratuity to-day; now's your opportunity."

"May he die like the dog he is!" cried a voice somewhere outside the grating.

They heard the curse and laughed under their breath, but the laugh died in their throats as Grosglik entered. Heads bent in humble salutation at every wicket, and a deep silence followed, broken only by the hissing of the water over the gas stove. The porter took the great man's hat, and gently divested him of his overcoat.

He rubbed his hands, stroked his black whiskers, and spoke thus: "Do you know, gentlemen? A frightful accident has just happened!"

"But not to you, Mr. President? Lord forbid!" a voice cried anxiously.

"What can it have been?" they all exclaimed in apparent terror.

"Have we lost anything on the Stock Exchange?" the acting manager of the firm inquired, leaning over from his partition.

"Has any uninsured house been burnt down?"

"Has any relation of yours died, Mr. President?"

"Have your beautiful American horses been stolen?"

"Mr. Pelman," Grosglik said with grave rebuke, "do not say foolish things!"

"But what is it then, Mr. President? I am dying to know!" Steiman entreated.

"A fall, a terrible fall!"

"Who has fallen?—Where!—Where from?—When?—How?" The questions came quick, with ardent interest.

"From the first floor.—A comb has fallen and broke all its teeth. Ha ha!" And the Old Man laughed at the surprise he had given them.

"Oh, what a joke, what a clever joke!" And they all shouted with laughter, though they had heard the same stupid jest at least ten times every season.

"A clown's jest!" Stanley Vilchek growled.

"Oh, he can afford it; he has plenty of money!" Blumenthal answered in a whisper.

Grosglik entered his private room, situated beyond the bureau, and looking out on the yard.

It was an apartment most sumptuously fitted up. The walls, hung with red stuffs fringed with gold, were in perfect harmony with the mahogany furniture, richly decorated with bronze. A large Venetian window, curtained with heavy draperies, opened on the long courtyard, surrounded by four-storeyed factory buildings.

Grosglik looked for a while at the transmission belt that traversed the yard and was perpetually running; then at the long line of men and women pressing one after the other towards one of the doors, and bearing on their backs great bundles of woollen scarfs. They were weavers who took the woollen yarn from the factory, and wove the scarfs by hand. He then proceeded to open a cash-box built into the wall, went over its contents, and took out a bundle of papers, which he laid down on a desk near the window, having previously drawn a yellow screen before it. Then, taking a seat at the desk, he touched a bell.

At once the acting manager came in carrying a big portfolio full of papers.

"What news, Mr. Steiman?"

"Nothing to speak of.—A. Waber's house was burnt last night."

"Don't you know of anything else?" he queried, looking over the papers one after the other with extreme care.

"I'm afraid I do not, Mr. President," he replied humbly.

"You don't know much then," the banker grunted, pushing the papers aside, and touching the bell twice.

Steiman was succeeded by another clerk, the head cashier.

"Any news, Mr. Shulc?"

"A couple of workmen killed at Baluty, one had his belly ripped open."

"That's of no consequence: we shall always have plenty of that sort of goods. Anything else?"

"This morning Pinkus Meyersohn was said to be hard up."

"Yes, he intends to fail and compound with his creditors at twenty-five roubles in the hundred. Bring me his account with us."

It was brought in immediately.

The banker went through it with attention, and said with a laugh: "Let him fail, it will do us no harm. For these last six months I have known he was in deep waters and had a mind to go under."

"Yes, Mr. President, I heard you tell Steiman."

"I have a good nose for such things. I always say: 'Better comb yourself once properly than scratch your head twenty times.' Ha ha!" This he considered a witty saying, and laughed loud.

"Anything more?" he asked further.

"Nothing. Except that I think you are looking poorly to-day, Mr. President."

"You are a great fool, and I shall have to reduce your salary!" he cried, very much put out by what he heard; and when the cashier had withdrawn, he scrutinized himself in the glass, felt his plump cheeks, and put out his tongue to see what the matter was.

"I—I don't know. I must take doctor's advice," he thought, and rang three times.

Enter Blumenfeld with a sheaf of correspondence and accounts. This was the musician who had played at Horn's lodgings.

"Victor Hugo died yesterday," he gave hesitatingly as his item of news, and set to reading aloud some report or other.

"Left a large fortune?"

"Six millions of francs."

"A pretty sum. In what?"

"In three per cent *rentes françaises*, and Suez Canal shares."

"Excellent securities.—What was his business?"

"Literature. He——"

"What, literature?" Grosglik exclaimed in amazement, staring and stroking his whiskers.

"Yes, a great poet, a great writer altogether."

"A German?"

"A Frenchman."

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten; it was he who wrote *With Fire and Sword*.* My Mary read me some quite pretty passages from it."

Blumenfeld did not set him right, but read the letters, noted down the replies, gathered up the papers, and was about to leave, when the banker beckoned him to remain.

"Mr. Blumenfeld, I hear you play the piano."

"I graduated from the conservatory in Leipzig, and took the whole of Leschetizki's piano course in Vienna."

"Very glad to hear it. I like music exceedingly. Especially the grand pieces sung by Patti in Paris. I remember perfectly——" Here he set to humming modestly an air from some operetta, adapted to a barrel-organ. "I have a good ear, eh?"

"A most extraordinary one!" Blumenfeld murmured, with his eyes fixed on the banker's huge ears, tinged a livid red.

"I have had the idea of your giving lessons to my Mary. She plays well, and it will not really be giving lessons at all: you will merely sit by and see that she makes no mistakes. What do you charge per hour?"

"I am at present teaching at the Müllers'. Three roubles an hour."

"What, three roubles? But you must go to a hovel at the very end of the town, and have to talk with old Müller, a boor. With such people, what pleasure can you have? With me, you will be in a palace."

"He has a palace too."

"Well, no matter, we shall not quarrel," the banker concluded.

"When am I to come?"

"This afternoon."

* By Sienkiewicz!—*Translator's Note.*

"Very well, Mr. President."

"Send Steiman to me."

Steiman was there in a flash, awaiting his orders anxiously.

Grosglik thrust his hands into his pockets, walked about the room, twiddled his whiskers for some time, and then made the following pronouncement: "I wish to say that this continual jingling of glasses and hissing of gas in the bureau is getting on my nerves."

"We have such early hours, Mr. President, that we all must take breakfast here."

"And make your tea on the gas stove. Who pays for the gas? I do—I pay for the gas to help you gentlemen to drink tea all day long. There's no sense in that. From this day forward you shall pay for it."

"But, Mr. President, you also drink tea here."

"I do, and am going to—now, at once.—Antony, bring me some tea!" he called out to the front-door antechamber, raising his voice. "I have an idea. You go on drinking as before, you pay for the gas; it will not come in dear for so many of you; and you'll give me the tea gratis, in compensation for the gas plant used that is mine, in my office, and used during office hours."

"Very well, sir; my fellow clerks shall know of it."

"Mind, I do this for their good. At present they are ashamed to take tea; their conscience tells them it's at my expense. Now, when all pay for the gas, they will be able to look me boldly in the face. It is a highly ethical idea, Mr. Steiman, highly ethical."

"By the by, Mr. President, I was to make a request in the name of my fellow clerks."

"What? Then be quick about it; I have not much time."

"You promised us a gratuity, sir, at the close of the half-year."

"Ah, how are the accounts getting on?"

"They are working at them out of office hours, sir; all will certainly be ready in good time."

"Mr. Steiman," the banker said amicably, stopping in his walk, "pray be seated; you are tired."

"Many thanks, sir, but I must be off at once, I have so much to do."

"Oh, work will not run away, it can wait for you.—Sit down, and I'll tell you what. Are they expecting this gratuity with anything like eagerness?"

"They have deserved it by their honest work."

"You need not tell me what I know already!"

"Pray excuse me, Mr. President; I most sincerely beg your pardon," said the manager, with great humility of bearing.

"Let us talk as friends. What could I give them?"

"That is for you to decide, Mr. President."

"Well, suppose I gave them a thousand roubles. More I could not give, for I feel that the half-year will close with heavy loss."

"Yet our turnover is so far twice as big as last year's."

"Be quiet! I tell you that we have lost, and could not help losing.—Then take the round sum: one thousand roubles. How many clerks are there in this bureau?"

"Fifteen of us altogether."

"And how many in the branch office?"

"Five."

"Twenty then in all. How much would each get for himself? From thirty to fifty roubles; for we must substract the various fines.—Now, I ask you, what good would such a sum be to anybody? Of what use could it possibly be?"

"Considering our very meagre salaries, even such a sum would be very helpful."

"You are a simpleton, and don't know how to count!" Grosglik shouted fiercely, and walked about the room with hurried steps. "We are throwing money away, Mr. Steiman, if we scatter it so. What will become of it? You shall hear. You'll put it into the lottery, I know that's your way. Perlman will buy a new suit of clothes, to make the factory girls run after him. Kugelman will get a new hat for his wife, and Shulc will be off to see a music-hall singer. Vilchek alone will not waste the money, not he! but lend it out at a good rate of interest. For all the others every kopek will have been lost.

—But what? Am I to give my money to be wasted so? No. As a good citizen, I cannot do that," he shouted, striking his breast.

Steiman only smiled bitterly. The banker noted that smile, and cried: "What's the good of talking? I won't give them anything, I won't! But with the money I'll get a handsome set of furniture for my dining-room. You, gentlemen, will have the pleasure of saying about the town: 'Mr. Grosglik, our head, has bought a dining-room set for a thousand roubles, and was in the right to do so'!" And he laughed sarcastically.

Steiman fixed his pale eyes upon him—eyes out of which the colour had faded, red-rimmed eyes—and he kept them fixed a long time, till the banker, vaguely troubled and uneasy, walked round the room several times, and said: "Well then, let them have that gratuity—as a token that I appreciate good work."

He proceeded to fumble about among some papers in the safe, and at last took out a packet of yellow, faded bills of exchange, for one thousand five hundred roubles, and looked them through.

"Here you are: a thousand five hundred."

"Wasserman and Company's notes," said Steiman, looking them over. "Worth just half a kopek the lot."

"That's a question. The firm has gone into liquidation, you know, and may even now pull through and pay a hundred per cent."

"Even five per cent is out of the question; the creditors will not get even one."

"Well, here are your bills, and I wish you may get a hundred and fifty per cent."

"Thanks, Mr. President," said Steiman mournfully, making for the door.

"Take your bills with you, man," said Grosglik.

"There's plenty of paper in the office." Yet he took the bills and went out.

The banker set to work, and first of all he wrote down in

the ledger he kept in the safe, crossing off the heading "Gratuities" the sum of fifteen hundred roubles underneath as paid. That operation accomplished, he smiled to himself for some time, and caressed his whiskers.

Presently there came into his room a very elegantly dressed young Jew—tall, slender, with a pair of gold pince-nez on his high hooked nose, a red beard cut *à la* Van Dyke, hair as curly as wool and parted all the way from the crown to the nape of the neck. His olive eyes were ever restlessly wandering about from one object in the room to another. His chapped lips, purple and prominent, which he kept moistening with his tongue, curved somewhat insolently. He was Klein, a near cousin of the banker's, and in all his secrets.

He came in so noiselessly that Grosglik did not hear him enter; he surveyed the room, tossed his gloves on to an arm-chair, his hat on to another chair, and seated himself nonchalantly on an ottoman.

"How do, old fellow?" he said, lighting a cigarette.

"I am well; but how you upset me, Bronek, coming in so quietly!"

"Oh, you'll get over it!"

"Anything new?"

"A good deal; plenty of news. Fishbin to-day—well, it's all over with him."

"It'll do him good! What has he been? A man playing on ten instruments at a time—with head and elbows and knees and arms and legs! What has he got by it? One man would give him five kopeks, while the next turned him from the door."

"They say," Klein added, "that Goldberg's factory is to burn this week."

"Such a calamity is not unwelcome, even to the wealthiest man."

"Have you heard anything of Motel?"

"Let me not hear his name! A scoundrel, a robber, a maker of 'playtas,' who offers to pay thirty roubles in the hundred!"

"Ah well, people have to live somehow."

"You're a fool, Bronek! How dare you say so? I lose three thousand roubles by him."

"Just the sum he requires to marry on. Ha ha!" And he went on laughing, walking about the room and peeping into the open safe.

Grosglik caught him in the act, locked the safe at once, and said caustically: "Bronek, my safe isn't your intended, and you're ogling her as if she was! She's not for you, I give you my word; you shall never so much as kiss her, ha ha!"

What he laughed at was the doleful mien of Klein, who, though abashed, sat down by his side, and related several things to him in a confidential tone, to all which he listened most attentively.

At last, "All this," he said, "is perfectly well known to me. I must have a talk with Welt.—Mr. Blumenfeld!" (popping his head into the clerks' room) "please phone to Mr. Moritz Welt, asking him to come round on a very important matter of business.—Bronek! not a word about this. We shall eat Boroviecki raw!"

"And I say you'll not. He has on his side——"

Here he was cut short by the sudden irruption of an official, in such a state of confusion and dismay that Grosglik started from his seat.

"Mr. President, Mr. President! that blackguard Tushynski! What he has done!"

"What are you saying? And speak lower; this room isn't a synagogue."

"He cashed four hundred roubles and fled yesterday! I was at his lodgings, but he had gone—taken all his things and gone off—gone to America!"

The banker uttered a cry, and screamed with clenched fists: "Have the thief arrested—put in irons—sent to prison—sent to Siberia!"

"I meant to wire to the police; but all that costs money, and I could not act without authorization, sir."

"Money's no object! I don't mind giving all I have to

catch that thief. My four hundred roubles! Let him rot in prison for them!"

"Then, Mr. President, please open a credit at the bank for me."

"How much will it amount to?"

"I can't say, but at least some thirty or forty roubles."

"What? What? Am I to be robbed and have to pay for being robbed? Let him go scot-free to the devil!—Who gave him the order for cashing the money?"

"I did, Mr. President. But," he added in great trepidation, "it was you yourself who authorized me to do so."

"It was you who sent him; you are liable. I won't hear one word. I'm not going to lose my four hundred roubles; I'll have them out of you."

"Mr. President, I am poor—I have done nothing dishonest—for twenty years I have worked faithfully in your office; and I have eight children!—And you yourself authorized me to send that scoundrel for the money!" And with a sob and a look of despair he threw himself at the banker's feet.

"You are responsible to the account department. You should have known what sort of a man he was. I tell you once for all, the money must be forthcoming. Now go!" he cried in a fury; then he turned his back upon him, and began sipping his tea.

The clerk remained a minute, staring at the banker's broad back, at the thin thread of smoke rising from the cigar at the edge of the desk—and withdrew with a heavy sigh.

"He thinks me an idiot. He has gone shares with Tushynski. Jail-birds both of them!"

"Mr. Welt is here!"

"Show Mr. Welt in, show him in!—Bronek! go after that blockhead; tell him that—unless the money is handed over directly—to prison he goes.—Pray walk in, Mr. Welt," he cried, seeing him in the office, talking to Vilchek.

The banker and Moritz shook hands, the latter saying, with a sharp glance: "You sent for me, but I was coming by myself—on business of my own."

"If so, please let us settle it at once. My business with you is of an extremely delicate nature."

"Mine is this: Adler and Company, wanting a considerable quantity of wool, have applied to me. Now, I can get that wool, but need the money to pay cash for it."

"Good. You shall have the cash, and we go shares.—All right?"

"On the usual terms: half the profit, which is to be fifteen per cent."

"How much do you require?"

"Thirty thousand marks. On Leipzig."

"Very good; I'll wire you the amount. When are you starting?"

"To-night. Back in a week."

"That's settled then!" the banker cried in high glee, and pulling his chair away from the desk, lit a cigar and eyed Welt keenly for some minutes. He returned the look, biting the knob of his cane.

"How have you been getting on with your cotton?"

"Sold one half of it."

"I know, I know. And made seventy-five per cent profit. And what about the rest?"

"We shall spin, weave, and print it all."

"Factory building yet?"

"It will be roofed in a month; in three the machinery will be put up, and in October it will set to work."

"Quick work; I like that. Lodz-fashion, splendid!" He added, lowering his voice, and with a discreet smile: "Borowiecki is a man of great abilities—but——" Here he hesitated, and smiled an enigmatic smile, half hid in a cloud of smoke.

"But—?" Moritz repeated, curious to hear what would come.

"But he is too fond of love-affairs with married women. For a manufacturer, that is not the thing."

"He gets no harm by it. And besides, he will soon be married; he has a fiancée."

"A fiancée isn't a bill of exchange that has to be met, but

just an I O U, which can be dishonoured without bankruptcy. I like Boroviecki exceedingly; so much so that—were he but of our people—my Mary should be his bride at once. But——"

"But—?" Moritz repeated a second time, for the banker had made a long pause.

"But I am compelled to deal disagreeably by him, which pains me very much—so much that I would beg you to explain matters to him."

"Why, what on earth—" Welt began, very ill at ease.

"In short, I am forced to withdraw the credit I had given him." The banker said the words sadly, in the tones of a man who is sincerely grieved. He pursed up his mouth and chewed at his cigar, all the time closely watching Moritz, who made fruitless attempts to settle his glasses and suppress the agitation he felt.

The news was a thunderstroke. Speedily mastering himself, however, he said curtly, stroking his beard: "Well, we shall get credit elsewhere."

"I know you will, and that is what makes me regret so much that I shall not be able to have any business relations with you."

"No business relations! Why?" Welt demanded. The banker's countenance, as much as his ambiguous words, made him feel uneasy in the highest degree.

"I cannot. My capital is tied up in such a way that it is out of the question; and besides, I have many other points to consider. I must not expose myself to any loss—or unpleasantness," he explained; but the explanation was obscure, hesitating, fragmentary. He evidently expected Moritz would be first to question him explicitly.

Moritz, however, held his peace. He felt assured that this withdrawal of credit was the result of machinations, of secret pressure exerted on Grosglik; and he did not care to ask about anything, lest he should thereby betray the extreme importance which this act had for them.

Grosglik, who again was walking up and down the room, said in friendly and somewhat confidential tones: "Between

ourselves, and speaking quite frankly, Mr. Moritz, why should you remain in partnership with Boroviecki? Can you not start a factory on your own?"

"Got no money," he said laconically, and paused for a reply.

"That's no answer. There are those who have, and who repose great trust in you and your abilities. Why am I doing business with *you?* Why am I lending *you* thirty thousand marks at a word? Because I know you well—know that I shall make ten per cent by trusting you."

"Only seven and a half," Moritz put in quickly.

"Oh, I am not speaking of this present case, but in general. Everyone wishes to have dealings with you, and you may very soon be a made man; why, then, take risks with Boroviecki? He's long-headed; he's unrivalled in the colouring line. Yes, but he lacks caution. Why does he go about Lodz saying we must 'raise the level' of the goods produced here? A most silly thing to say! What does he mean by 'raising the level' of goods? Or by 'putting an end to shoddy textiles'?—Those are his very words, and foolish words they are," he cried, raising his voice in anger. "If his idea had been to make cheaper goods, to open new markets for our surplus wares, or to raise the rate of the percentage we gain —oh, that would have been a clever thing. But what he aims at is reforming the industry of the whole town. He'll not succeed, and may well get his neck wrung for him. For suppose he harmed no one by his doings, no one would have a word to say. If he wants to take risks, let him! If he climbs a roof, he may slip and get a tooth knocked out. What does the man want with a factory? Knoll offered him twenty thousand a year, which is a pretty income; I myself perhaps don't get so much. No; he refused. Was determined to 'raise the level of our products.' Yes, and spoil the business of Shaya, Zuker, Knoll, all the cotton-manufacturers in Lodz. And do you know why? In order that the Poles may say: 'You make shoddy stuffs, you are swindlers, you exploit the working-men, but Boroviecki does business honestly, honourably, solidly—as we do.' "

"Mr. President," Moritz observed ironically, "you see very far ahead."

"Don't laugh at me!—But I do see very far. When Kurovski set up his factory, I foresaw what would come of it, and told Glancman to set up one just like it—and do so at once, or Kurovski would ruin him. Well, he wouldn't listen to me—and where is he now? He has lost everything and is now an employee at Shaya's, for Kurovski will take none but his own people. Now Kurovski stands so firm that nobody can compete with him, and in a year's time he will be able to sell colours at his own price.—But that's not the point; the point is that, where one Pole succeeds, sixty more come in his train. You think that Travinski is not in competition with Blachman and with Kessler, do you? He is simply ruining their affairs. His game is philanthropy, and others must pay dear for what it costs him. He himself puts nothing by; every year he has to add a little more of his capital. But he spoils business for others, sells his goods cheap, and raises the salaries of both foremen and hands. Yesterday the whole spinning department of the Kesslers was at a standstill. Why? Because all the men declared they would not work for less than what Travinski's workmen got! A nice situation for a factory so bound by engagements to deliver goods at a given date that they were forced to agree to everything! If Kessler gets ten per cent less this year than last, he has Travinski to thank for that. Ugh! it is sheer piggishness; nay, worse: it's the rankest stupidity. And now here comes this Boroviecki starting up and claiming to 'raise the level of our goods'! Ha ha! I can't help laughing.—But, should he succeed, then in a couple of years we shall have a Sosnovski starting business to 'raise the level' too; and in four years there'll be eight of them, all agog to raise levels and lower prices. And in ten years all Lodz will be theirs!"

Moritz fell a-laughing at the banker's fears.

"It's no laughing matter. My supposition is not a mere bugbear; I know those men very well, and I know we cannot compete with them, for they'll have the whole of the country on their side. That's why we simply are obliged to

eat Boroviecki up, and ought all of us to understand the situation—and march together, hand in hand!"

"And the Germans, what of them?" Moritz demanded curtly, as he settled his pince-nez.

"They don't count here. Sooner or later they will go off to the devil, but we shall remain. This, then, is our affair alone. Mr. Moritz, do you catch my meaning?"

"Quite. But if my capital brings me a larger income with Boroviecki, with Boroviecki I go," Moritz said in an undertone, and bit the top of his cane.

"Spoken like a man of business! And I can guarantee that your capital will bring you nothing at all—and that you may lose all you have."

"Well, I wish you a good-morning, Mr. President. Many thanks for giving me these hints."

"I, Mr. Moritz, am a thinker. All our people are mere cattle—scurvy fellows, who only consider how to gain money on the nail, and then on Saturdays to eat a good supper and sleep their fill under a feather-bed.—What are you going to do about it?"

"I shall see.—Then you're not giving Boroviecki even a groschen's worth of credit?"

"I cannot possibly lose all my manufacturing people for his sake."

"Ah, a conspiracy then?" Moritz blurted out.

"What do you mean? The idea! It's merely a self-defence. Had it been anyone but Boroviecki, he could have been crushed easily, and have gone to pot without much ado. But you know what a godsend the fellow has been to Bucholc, and what an eye he has for colours—what a genius! Besides, many believe in him, and he has relations in the Lodz world, and is a known man on the markets."

"All that's true; but it means that he may weather the storm," Moritz observed in conclusion, as he took his leave.

When in the office, he slipped past the partition to have a word with Vilchek. "Mr. Vilchek, Grünspan senior would like to confer with you as soon as may be."

"And I can tell you what he wants to confer about. Please

say I am in no hurry to sell my land; I mean to make a farm of it."

"As you please," Moritz answered, and went out.

The thought of that conspiracy haunted him all down Piotrovska Street. He was too bemused even to recognize Sigismund Grünspan nodding to him from his carriage, and beckoning to him.

But Sigismund jumped down and accosted Welt. "I say, Moritz, is this the way you cut your old acquaintances?"

"Ah!—But it must be only an instant. I'm pressed for time."

"All I meant to say was, come on Sunday. Mela will be coming home."

"Is she still in Florence?"

"Along with Rose; madcaps both. Rose did not care to write to Shaya, so she wired the whole of her last letter—two hundred lines!"

"They must be enjoying themselves well there."

"Rose is bored. But an Italian prince has fallen in love with Mela. He intends to follow her to Lodz."

"What for?"

"To marry her."

"What nonsense!"

"A genuine prince, my boy," Sigismund declared, unbuttoning his university coat.

"You may get as genuine a one on sale at any Italian hotel."

They separated, for Moritz was in a great hurry. He used to pay a daily visit to the factory, to see how fast the walls rose, but on this day his steps were rather slower. Grosglik's words lay heavy on his mind, and he pondered over them, though he certainly thought the banker's prophecy grossly fantastic, and never to be fulfilled.

He looked about him as he walked along: at the town, with its long lines of houses; at the great chimneys, soaring up by hundreds, red in the sunlight, like tall trunks of pines, each with a floating plume of smoke; he heard the murmurs of the streets, the muffled but incessant hum of factories at

work, the rumbling of the heavily laden lorries, passing in every direction.

He did not think of the banker's terrors any more, but the conspiracy against Boroviecki troubled him very much. It was an enterprise in which his own capital was engaged; the factory concerned him from no other point of view. The possibility of Charles's losing his all did not concern Welt, but he had a deep dislike for the smallest risk on his own account. And he now felt sure that, a conspiracy once formed against Charles, he would, as they said, "be devoured raw"!

"A rotten business!" he thought; and it was only now he began to understand the meaning of so many things that had occurred to their disadvantage.

The contractor who was to direct the bricklayers' work had withdrawn from his engagement; they had forbidden him. Cavils had been made at the plans they had submitted, and the leave to execute them had been delayed; it was their doing. The Building Commission had ordered the work to be stopped, and decreed that the walls must be of greater thickness. Information had been laid against them. The Rhenish firms had all refused to grant credit for the machines purchased. That, too, they had done. And all those falsehoods that had been spread abroad throughout Lodz, equally malicious and ridiculous, but which would certainly hinder the firm from obtaining credit, who had set them afloat? Who but the agents of Grosglik, of Shaya, of Zuker?

"The business is no good, no good in the least.—They will simply annihilate him." So thought Moritz, more and more gloomily, and when he entered the street where their factory was situated, he was already casting about for a pretext to withdraw from the whole concern. But then, some decent excuse must be found, for he did not wish to break with Charles completely.

CHAPTER III

THE remains of Meissner's factory, purchased by Boroviecki for his new works, stood near Konstantynoska Street, in one of the adjoining lanes. It was a quarter mostly of small factories and tiny workshops, now rapidly dying out, crushed by the competition of the big industries.

The lanes were crooked, lined with one-storey wide-fronted houses; they were poverty-stricken, dirty, unpaved. As to the houses, they leaned sideways with age, having slowly sunk into the soft moist earth—abashed, as it were, by the grandeur of Müller's factories, and the enormous chimneys which towered all round—a thick forest of brick and mortar.

In front of the dilapidated houses there ran the remnants of side-walks. These touched the windows where the houses had sunk deeper, and the ruts and holes in their interstices were filled up with rubbish. Along the middle of the lanes lay large quagmires, full of mud that was always liquid; and about them poor children used to gather, as wretched-looking and filthy as the vermin which came to life in those ruinous dwellings. Where there was no mud, its place was filled by coal-dust which the cart-wheels scattered about in the air in clouds that hovered over the lanes, begrimed the dwellings, destroyed every speck of verdure on the crooked, sapless trees, whose gnarled, twisted boughs bent over the fences or stretched before the houses like dry skeletons.

The harsh monotonous whir of the weavers' hand looms, whose grey angular frames oscillated behind windows no longer transparent, filled the air and mingled with the mighty roar of Müller's works.

Moritz traversed this home of a dying industry with hasty

steps; he was disgusted at the misery of those sinking houses, and irritated at the consumptive wheezing of the looms, which sounded like the rattle in the throat of a dying man.

But he loved the uproar of the huge machinery; the crashing turmoil of the factories' gigantic organisms gave him a pleasant commotion—a feeling as of strength and health; and the very sight of a factory made him glad. His face lighted up on perceiving Müller's works in full activity; he had a kindly glance for Travinski's spinning-mill hard by; he cast a long look at the red pavilions of old Baum's quiet factory opposite, whose windows, coated with dust and cobwebs, looked dull as the glassy eyes of a man just dead.

It was a little beyond Travinski's mills, and with only a few empty plots between, that Boroviecki was building, or rather transforming the buildings sold him by Meissner for next to nothing. They had stood empty for fifteen years. The whole of the front was now covered with scaffoldings, for they were raising it a storey higher. There were scaffoldings, too, in the great courtyard inside, beyond which red brick pavilions were rising, and workmen's silhouettes flitting to and fro.

"Good-morning, Mr. David," said Moritz at the sight of Halpern, who, with his umbrella under his arm and his head uplifted, stood in the centre of the quadrangle to see how the work was getting on.

"Good-morning! We shall have a fine new factory here. And how fast they build it too! It's a pleasure to see it. I am unwell, and the doctor told me to take care of myself and do no work; so I am doing nothing, nothing at all, but wandering about Lodz and seeing how it grows, for the sake of my health; and that's the best medicine for my complaint."

"Is Boroviecki in?"

"In the spinning department. I saw him there but a minute ago."

Moritz entered a low pavilion destined for the spinning department, with glazed peaked roofs. The chambers, perfectly well lighted from above, were literally crammed full

of pieces of machinery, with bricks to make foundation platforms for the plant, and noisy with men's voices and the rattle of machines which were being mounted, and whose long ribs, not unlike those of some antediluvian monster, stretched across the rooms and were all coated over with dust. The acrid smell of quicklime and the pungent odour of asphalt, ready and on the boil in one of the rooms, pervaded the air.

"Moritz, send me Yaskulski!" cried Max Baum, who, clad in a blue blouse, pipe in mouth, and smeared with tar, was standing among the men that were putting the machines together, and as hard at work as any of themselves.

Yaskulski, whom Boroviecki had from the beginning of the work taken on as an odd-job man, came in hastily.

"Hey, my nobleman! bring four stout fellows here to man the windlass—and look sharp about it!" Max shouted, and along with the other men continued putting together the machine, that was to be lifted afterwards by means of a windlass and set down on a solid brick platform. Moritz tried to address him from the middle of the room, being unable to get nearer; but he called back: "Don't bother me! You'll tell me all on Sunday. Charles has gone into the courtyard."

And there he was, standing by several great pits into which quicklime was being poured and immediately slaked. The clouds of white vapour from the creamy lime overhung them, dimming the white figures of the workers and the outlines both of men and of carts.

Boroviecki came out presently, covered all over with white dust, shook hands with Moritz, and whispered into his ear: "Do you know, they have not forwarded the dyeing-plant. Said they had none ready."

"They won't send it on credit; what are we to do?"

"I have written to England. They'll come rather late and cost a little more, but we'll have them. Those German sons of dogs!" he swore fiercely.

Moritz said no word, but eyed him with close scrutiny. Then he looked round at the whole factory, at the workers, at the pieces of machinery standing in the quadrangle under

thick awnings. He went into every hole and corner, peeped in once more to see Max, into the cement storehouse, and examined everything with particular attention. And the more he looked, the less he liked it.

"That's dough, not mortar!" he complained, seeing the foundations being laid.

"Let others prefer sand to mortar!" was Charles's reply; "I don't choose to have the whole place crashing down on my head."

"I calculated yesterday that Monier's vaulting system would cost two thousand roubles more than the other."

"But for strength it will be worth four thousand more. If a fire should happen to break out, our works would not be destroyed."

"Is that the only reason you had for introducing these vaultings?" Moritz asked in a whisper, settling his pince-nez.

"Also because, should a fire break out, it can only extend to one storey and no further."

"Bah! sometimes a fire is not—not such a calamity."

Charles did not reply; he had gone elsewhere.—Moritz walked about still for some time, vexed to see that the factory was being unexceptionably built in every part of it, and would come very dear.

In the bureau he ran his eye over the list of wages, and remarked to the manager what extravagantly large sums he considered they were. He also looked into a good many other things, all of which he found too good and too dear.

In reply to his observations, Charles only said: "I know what I am about."

"You are building, not a factory, but a palace. Besides, such luxury is too dear for us."

"This is not luxury, but simply good honest work, which always is cheaper than the other. Look at the Blohmans. They started their works on the cheap; now they are forced to make fresh repairs every year: their place is crumbling over their heads.—Now, Moritz, I'll leave you. You slept badly overnight, and are in a peevish mood."

"My money is in danger; I must see to it," was Moritz's thought, as he walked away.

Charles mounted the scaffoldings to oversee the work; then he hurried away to where the bricks were stored, and amongst the heaps of cast-up earth, and the lime-pits, and the brick-piles, and the piles of timber for building, and amongst the many carts coming in or going out. He gave directions to Yaskulski, who rushed frantically about to give satisfaction, out of breath, and with a continual look of dread upon his face. He dropped in on Max many a time; and in short was in every part of the factory, the building of which, owing to his indefatigable energy and continual presence, went forward with great rapidity. He cared about neither the dust nor the ever-increasing heat of the sun, nor even about his own weariness. At daybreak he was working with the men, and left the place with them when evening fell.

His zeal for the work was still further stimulated by Max, who took great pleasure in setting up the machinery in concert with the men, going together with them to a tavern in the evening, and drinking innumerable flagons of beer. He slept now for only a few hours, and had quite thrown off his indolent habits.

Since Max's visit to the country the relations between him and Charles had been somewhat cooler—partly because the factory now absorbed them both so completely, but also because of certain biting words which Charles had dropped at their departure from Kurov. He could not forget them, especially as he still thought of Anne, and with yet greater regard than before, and as Boroviecki's very frequent calls upon the Müllers had become more painful to him. Charles, he felt, was playing a double game, and his frank downright nature revolted at the thought.

So they fell more and more apart; and this estrangement proceeded likewise from a certain racial and intellectual discrepancy and opposition between their minds. Charles at times realized these with a somewhat forced smile of resignation; but Max now felt them deeply, set them down as all owing to Charles, and resented them with sincere indignation.

It was almost twelve when Boroviecki left the factory, passing through the back garden, opening on another lane, in which there stood a large ground-floor house, which had been repaired in a very great hurry, for in a few weeks he was to bring Anne and his father to live there. It was there he now dwelt provisionally, occuping one room, in which he had already done changing clothes when the factory hooters sounded noon.

He perused a letter sent to him by Lucy, making an appointment with him at Helen Park in the grotto, at four P. M.

"I have enough of her!" he stormed, tearing the letter to pieces.

Yes, he had indeed enough of her. Those clandestine meetings, every time in some fresh place, were more than distasteful to him; he was weary of that very love of hers, intense though it was. He no longer cared for her at all, she took up so much time that the factory needed! Even in the times of apparent ecstasy, held in her arms with passionate kisses and embraces, and fully aware that she loved him, worshipped him, doted on him to distraction, he was seeking for some means of breaking with her—and finding to his vexation that she gave him no opportunity, no pretext for any break.

He was boarding at the Baums', the house being so near at hand; but this time he did not repass through the garden and his own buildings, but into the other street, where the Müllers' mansion stood. There, on passing the tiny house in which they made their dwelling, he slackened his pace, and gave a glance at the windows.

It was just so. Mada's bright face peeped, first from one window, then from another, and finally her figure appeared in the porch which formed a sort of recess.

"Are you going to your dinner?" she asked merrily, raising her china-blue eyes to his.

"I am. And you, have you not dined yet?" he said, holding out his hand.

"Not yet. Wait, I must wipe my hand first.—I have been

cooking the dinner by myself," she said with a laugh, wiping her hands on her long, blue apron.

"So you have the kitchen in the parlour now!" he remarked with a spice of malice.

"Oh, I was putting things in order there," she faltered, blushing for shame to think he might have guessed she had been awaiting him at the parlour window.

"Where did you get blackened so?" she inquired, when calm again.

"Where am I blackened?"

"Under your eyes, here. I shall wipe it off, though—if you'll let me," she said, with timid pleading.

"If you please."

She carefully wiped away the black speck with her handkerchief.

"Perhaps my temple here is blackened and grimy too," he said, rather amused by her, and pointing to it.

"No, I can assure you, it is not," she said, looking all over his face carefully as she spoke.

He kissed the ministering hand, and would have kissed the other also, had she not started back suddenly, her golden lashes drooping over her eyes, dark with strong emotion. She stood there for a moment, helplessly fingering her apron. Charles laughed at her confusion.

"You are making fun of me," she said, much hurt.

"In that case, I take my leave."

"Come in the evening; come with Mr. Max; I shall make you some apple tarts."

"Cannot Max come without me?"

"No, no! I'd rather have you without him!" she cried, and, again blushing furiously, ran away into the house.

Charles smiled to see her run—and went off to dine.

Since winter many changes had taken place at the Baums'. The great factory pavilions were all silent. It was the silence of death, for now scarcely a fourth part of the people were at work. The garden about the house had the air of a wilderness. Multitudes of dead trees held up their

naked branches to the sky; and all the rest stood neglected among the rank weeds that had overspread the flower-beds, now neither dug nor sown. In the house there was not a gleam of joy or gladness: the deserted rooms were hushed, and exhaled a musty odour. The office was almost empty. Baum had sent his clerks away, keeping only Joe Yaskulski, and a few women in the department where retail goods were sold.

All told of coming bankruptcy, and the air was impregnated with odours of medicines, Mrs. Baum having been sick for several months. Bertha and her children had gone back to their father's house; Frau Augusta alone remained, with her two cats and the bandages on her everlastingly swollen face; old Mr. Baum, who sat alone all day in his bureau, on the first floor of the factory; and Joe, still more timid and gawky than he had been before.

Boroviecki went straight to the room where Mrs. Baum was lying, to talk a little with her. She was sitting up in bed, propped by a number of pillows, and looking mechanically out with dull, faded eyes, at the trees waving outside the casement. She held a stocking in her hand, but was not knitting. She smiled—so sad a smile that it pierced the heart.

"Good-morning!" she answered Charles in a feeble voice, adding: "Is Max here?"

"Not yet, but he will come presently."

Then he asked about her health, how she had spent the night, how she felt now . . . and so on. Her state aroused a feeling of tenderness and sympathy that in him was strange indeed.

"It is well with me, well," she replied in German, while, as if awaking from a long sleep, she looked round the room, her eyes resting on the photographs of her children and grandchildren that hung upon the walls; she followed the to-and-fro movements of the pendulum of the clock as it ticked, and at last tried to do a little knitting, but it slipped from her strengthless fingers.

"It is well with me, well!" she repeated half-consciously,

and once more fixed her gaze on the long leaves of the acacia waving outside the window.

She noticed neither Frau Augusta, though she passed through the rooom several times, stopping a moment to arrange the pillows, nor her husband, who came and stood by her bed-side, to cast a long look at that face, pallid with a shade of yellow.

"Max!" she whispered suddenly, and her cadaverous features shone for a moment at the sound of her son's approaching footsteps.

Max came in and kissed her hand. She pressed his head to her bosom, and stroked it; but when he had passed into the dining-room, she turned her eyes again to the window.

Dinner there was usually silent and short, everybody feeling depressed by the prevailing sadness around.

Old Mr. Baum had changed almost past recognition. He had grown much thinner and stooped much more; his face was browner, and on either side of his nose a furrow ran down that seemed as if carved in wood. He endeavoured to talk, and asked about the progress of the new factory, but more than once broke off in the midst of a sentence, and fell into a brown study; or, forgetting his meal, would cast his eyes on the walls of Müller's place, and let them wander towards the glass roofs of Travinski's spinning-mill, glittering in the sunlight.

Dinner over, he withdrew to his factory, walked about the deserted chambers, gazed at the looms that stood idle; then, shut up in his office, he would look out upon the town with its thousands of houses, factories, and high chimneys, and listen with unspeakable bitterness to the sounds that told of the seething life within.

He never went anywhere now, but remained cloistered in his factory, his life ebbing away with its life. For, as Max had declared, the factory was nigh its end. In spite of all endeavours, there was no means of keeping it alive. In its conflict with the giant Steam it was doomed to succumb. And yet, even now, Baum could not see this; or rather he would not;

he closed his eyes and went on struggling, determined to struggle to the bitter end.

No one could convince him; neither Max, nor his sons-in-law, nor those of his old friends who still survived, advising him to substitute steam for hand-labour production; some of them even ready to aid him with their credit or their money. He would not hear of it.

What he sold was next to nothing. The spring season had been a terrible one for Lodz in general. He had reduced the number of his workmen, restricted production, retrenched on his own personal needs—but remained inflexible in his resistance. A void had opened round him. In Lodz they had begun by saying that old Mr. Baum was out of his mind, but after a time of mockery and derision they had all forgotten him.

As soon as dinner was over, Boroviecki withdrew. Not till he was in Piotrovska Street did he breathe freely, so sinister had been the impression made on him by the deathly atmosphere of the house.

As he had still plenty of time before going to meet Lucy, he repaired to Vysocki's lodgings. Dr. Vysocki, however, was very busy, several patients being in the waiting-room, and he greeted Charles with a troubled expression.

"Excuse me for a little," he said; "when I have done with this patient, we shall go round together to my mother's room."

Boroviecki sat down and took in at a glance the whole of the tiny room, crowded with furniture and smelling strongly of carbolic acid and iodoform.

"Well, let's go in to Mother," Vysocki said at last, after dismissing an aged Jew to whom he had been explaining at great length what he ought to do.

"Doctor, Doctor!" the man cried in a shaky voice, coming back again.

"What do you want?"

"Doctor, have I any cause to fear?"

"I have told you there was no danger, provided you do as I bid you."

"Many thanks, I shall; I need to be in good health. I am in business, and have a wife and children. And grandchildren too. But I am much afraid, and therefore ask you, Doctor: have I anything to fear?"

"I have told you once for all!"

"Then, till I see you again! But—— Excuse me, I am off, I am out," he cried, for Vysocki was rushing at him as if he would throw him out of doors.

At that very instant a corpulent Jewess pushed forward into the doorway, and whined: "Doctor, Doctor! I have great difficulty in breathing!"

"Instantly.—Perhaps you will go round to my mother, Charles, and I shall join you when I have done with my patients."

"What a queer collection you have!"

"Queer indeed. The one who just left me has been bothering me for a whole hour, and, profiting by your appearance, went off forgetting to pay."

"That's no joke. But I fancy such cases must occur seldom."

"Jews are always ready to forget, and one has to remind them; which is far from pleasant," Vysocki returned dejectedly, as he took him in to Mrs. Vysocka.

It was since Boroviecki's last visit to the country that he had made her acquaintance. Anne had written to her, and he had more than once spoken to her in the interests of his fiancée. He found her in an arm-chair near one of the windows, sitting in the full glare of the sunbeams, of which a shaft shot through upon her; all the other windows were darkened by drawn blinds and *portières*.

"I have had to wait a long time, a long time for your coming," she observed, extending to him her long, exquisitely beautiful hand and delicate taper fingers.

"I have indeed been slow to come, but I trust you will forgive my delay. It was really impossible to come yesterday. Some machinery had arrived, and I was forced to spend the whole afternoon seeing it unpacked."

"Then it could not be helped, and I hope you will excuse

my asking you to come at all, since you have so little time."

"My time is at your service, madam!"

He sat down on a low stool beside her, but first drew it a little back into the shadow. The sun glared down upon the narrow space exposed to its beams and upon her slender frame, giving her black hair a ruddy tinge of mellow colour, lighting up her olive complexion, which was still most beautiful, and dusting with gold the brown of her large hazel eyes.

"You, I see, madam, are not afraid of the light," he could not help remarking.

"I am fond of it, and revel in the sunbeams.—Has Miecio many patients?"

"I saw several in the waiting-room."

"It matters not to me—oh, not at all—whether Miecio earns much or little; in either case we can both live on the residue of my personal estate. But it does matter to me if he could feel less interested in such a crowd of possibly unfortunate, but certainly filthy people—Jews and others—who flock to him here. True, something should be done to relieve suffering and misery; but why don't other doctors do as he does? Many belong to a class which should prevent them from having such an abhorrence to rage and dirt, to which they have been accustomed from their infancy."

A nervous tremor ran through her as she spoke, and over her handsome face there passed a look of disgust and loathing; she raised her lace handkerchief to her cheeks, as if at the nauseous remembrance of some very offensive odour.

"There's no help for it," said Charles, adding somewhat flippantly, "especially as Miecio loves his patients, and dreams of them alone."

"I admit the fact. I may even suppose that all great minds must have their dreams, their beautiful but chimerical visions, that make the sordid realities of life more bearable for them. More: I can understand a man devoting his whole life to such a dream; but not loving those dreams, clad in tatters and daubed with filth!"

She ceased from speaking, and drew forward a sea-green

silken screen, painted with golden birds and bushes; the sun, reflected from a zinc roof, was now throwing too fierce and crude a glare into her room.

For some minutes she sat in silence, her head turned in his direction, and quite transformed in the wonderful greenish gold light filtering through the screen. Then, in a confidential tone, "Do you know Melania Grünspan?" she asked; a subtle shade of aversion was audible, as the name fell from her lips.

"I do, but by sight only, and in company. Personally, I know her very little."

"A pity!" she said, rising to her feet.

She crossed the room several times with a stately tread, and listened at the door of her son's consulting-room, through which there came a faint sound of voices. She peered for a moment into the street, tumultuous and roaring with multitudinous movements, and with the fire of summer heat which poured down into it. Charles followed with much curiosity each queenly motion, and though he could not well distinguish her features in the shaded room, he could guess that she was greatly moved.

At last she put a direct question to him. "You are aware, are you not, that the girl Mela is in love with Miecio?"

"I have heard rumours in town to that effect, but taken no notice of them."

"Then it is already common talk! The fact is compromising," she said, firmly.

"Pardon me, and let me explain. They talk of mutual love between them, with a view to marriage."

"Never! I give you my word that, so long as I live, that shall never be," she said in low, impassioned tones. "What! my son marry a daughter of the Grünspans?"

"Miss Mela has in Lodz the reputation of a most honourable and intelligent girl. And as she is very rich besides and very good-looking, it follows——"

"Nothing follows; she is a Jewess!" Mrs. Vysocka hissed with all her force, in tones of scorn, almost of hatred.

"Quite true, she's a Jewess. But if a Jewess loves your

son and is loved by him, the fact solves the problem and settles all differences." He spoke trenchantly, for her prejudices, ridiculous in his ears, had somewhat ruffled him.

"My son may even be in love with a Jewess, but must never dream of uniting our blood to that of another race, hostile to ours."

"Allow me to think, madam, that what you say shows you to be greatly prejudiced."

"And why are you going to marry Anne? Why do you not take to yourself a wife from among the Jewesses or the German girls in Lodz? Ha?"

"Because none of the Jewish or German girls has attracted me to the point of marrying her. If any had, I should not waver for a minute. I am without any prejudice, either of caste or race; they are to my mind mere survivals from the past," he concluded, very much in earnest.

"Oh how blind you all are! You look at things only with the eyes of the body; you think neither of the morrow, nor of the coming race—your children!" she cried, wringing her hands in dismay and pity and indignation.

The talk tending less to amuse Boroviecki than to annoy him, he rose to take his leave.

"Mr. Charles, my wish in seeing you was to ask your help in explaining to Miecio what such a marriage would mean. I know he has the greatest esteem for you, and that he would be more ready to listen to you than to anybody else, since you are one of *us*. You understand my feelings, and can realize how impossible it is for me to think without horror of a low business man's daughter reigning among the living memories and the relics of our family during four centuries. What would *they* say to that?" she cried in agony, pointing with a sweeping gesture to a row of portraits of knights and senators, that loomed forth out of the dimness of her chamber in patches of mellow colour.

Boroviecki smiled grimly. Tapping with his finger an old rusty suit of armour that stood between two of the windows, he uttered these terse, trenchant words: "All this is no more!

Archæology has its place in the museums; in our days living men are too busy to trouble about ghosts!"

"You are laughing?—Yes, you have all of you sold yourselves to the Golden Calf; you call our traditions dust, nobility a prejudice, and virtue a pitiful and ridiculous superstition!"

"Not so; merely a thing of no use in our times. How can my respect for tradition help me to sell my calicoes? When I am starting a factory and looking about me for credit, how can the *Castellans*,* my forefathers, be of use? No *Voyvod* * can grant it, but the Jews can. All this antiquated prejudice about traditions is like a thorn in the foot: it hinders all progress. A man of the present day, who will not be the bondsman of another, must be freed from the fetters of the past, such as nobility, caste, and so forth. They hamper the will, they enfeeble it in the struggle with adversaries, unscrupulous because they have no traditions; with enemies formidable because they are their own past and present and future."

"No. That is not so.—But I say no more. You may be right; but never will I give up my point.—I will show you a letter from Miss Grünspan to Miecio, written in Italy. There is no indiscretion on my part, for some words in it are addressed to me."

The letter was rather long, penned in a good commercial hand, and full of slightly high-flown praises of Italy. But when she spoke of herself, her home, her anticipated meeting with Miecio, it thrilled with suppressed affection and longing.

"A charming letter!"

"Ridiculously exaggerated and quite commonplace. Her ecstasies are all taken from Baedeker; they are only poses to make herself interesting."

* *Castellans* and *Voyvods*—high dignitaries of the ancient kingdom of Poland, who were ex-officio members of the Senate. The families which had Voyvods and Castellans as ancestors constituted the aristocracy of the realm.—*Translator's Note.*

Vysocki rushed in, jaded, pale, with his tie on one side and his hair in disorder. He excused himself for not coming —and for having to depart at once. He was called by telephone to a factory where the machinery had crushed a workman's arm.

Boroviecki wished to leave with him and get away.

"Pray do as I have asked you," she said, pressing his hand in hers with a strong grip.

"I must first of all ascertain the real state of things. It may well be that the danger you foresee does not exist."

"I pray God it may not.—When shall I see you again?"

"Anne will be here in a fortnight; as soon as ever she comes, I shall bring her to see you."

"Shall you be at the Travinskis' on Sunday? It is her name-day."

"I shall, without fail."

She went before him to show him out, but on opening the door of the waiting-room, she shrank back quickly and rang violently for the servant.

"Marysia! Open the windows and let in some fresh air. I shall let the gentleman out by the other entrance."

She led him through a suite of darkened rooms with blinds drawn down and furniture of antique make, all hung with portraits and historical paintings, and old, torn, faded pieces of tapestry: melancholy apartments, not unlike chambers in some ancient convent.

"The woman is crazy!" Charles thought when he reached the street.

The weather was hotter than ever; volumes of smoke floated over the town like grey canopies, through which the sun poured its broiling heat and glowed intolerably. Men and women crawled along the pavement; horses stood still, with drooping heads, carts went by at a snail's pace, and all the bustle in the shops was no more; only the factories went on with never-ceasing din, breathing forth their smoky breaths from out of the high chimneys, and discharging into the gutters coloured streams of waste product, as exhausted living bodies discharge sweat.

Boroviecki made the best of his way to Helen Park, where it was very cool and quiet. The young trees were drinking in the sunbeams through every pore of their quivering leaves, that shaded the snowy tables of the restaurant pavilions there. The lawns were bright with fresh greenery, and looked like carpets, embellished with red and yellow tulip-flowers, and intersected with light brown paths and gravel walks, about which many a swallow flew.

In front of the menagerie cages, in which the wild beasts lay asleep, troops of children were running about and enjoying the fun of teasing the monkeys, which chattered and leaped furiously to and fro in the cage at the corner. The narrower avenues were edged with wild vines of a light luxuriant green, reflected in a long piece of water, whose smooth satin-like expanse was skimmed above by swallows' wings, and cloven beneath by the dark bulks of fishes darting to and fro. Below the pearly surface, down in the depths of the waters, carp in golden shoals moved by.

Charles entered the avenue, meaning to pass round the pond in shade, and thence to the upper park, when he noticed Horn, who was, along with Kama, sitting by the water's brink, and partly concealed by a wild vine. They were feeding the carps.

Kama was hatless, with hair all over her face; blowzed, and blithe as a goldfinch. In she cast the crumbs of bread, laughing merrily like a child, screaming at the fishes that rose to the surface and greedily opened their rounded mouths, and frightening them away with a long rod of willow. Every now and then she would turn her radiant face to Horn. He sat a little back, leaning against the pleached railings which supported the wild vines, and amused himself with the fishes quite as merrily as she did.

Boroviecki, walking away, could still see their heads bent above the water, when he had passed to the other side and reached the upper park; he could even hear at times their melodious laughter, ringing out from that leafy bower, and reverberating across the pond.

He walked for some time in complete solitude through

many a narrow walk, bordered with thickets and thorny bushes. Birds were twittering sleepily amongst the shrubs, leaves were rustling, dreamy sounds rose from the town afar.

He seated himself in a main alley, close to the steps down to the ponds, and watched the children playing very noiselessly under the closed eyes of their nurse-maids, dozing on the benches.

He woke up suddenly from his drowsy meditations; the sharp dry rustle of a gown had roused him. Raising his eyes, he beheld Mme Likiert just before him. She held a pale-violet sunshade in her hand: it cast its warm shadow over her sorrowful features and her great eyes.

Each saw the other at about the same time; each held out to the other a friendly hand. Her pale face was flushed with sudden joy, her eyes flashed with a bright light, her wan lips took a deep-red tint. She was stepping forward as if to embrace him. All of a sudden a cloud had come over the sun, and wrapped the park—and their souls—in greyness, as with a soiled rag. Her extended hand fell limp to her side, the fire in her eyes went out, her lips—pale once more—were set hard with pain, and her look, withdrawn from his face, was again shrouded in gloom. She shot a cold glance at him, and went swiftly by at first, then slowly down the steps to the ponds.

He followed her instinctively for a few steps, carried away by an extraordinary impulse that had seized him. She turned round on him instantly, threw him one look—very stern, yet very tearful—and went on her way.

Sitting down, he riveted his eyes on the spot where her eyes had gleamed a few instants ago, and touched his eyelids. They had suddenly grown heavy and burning hot. He was trembling all over; those eyes of hers had made his heart as cold as death. Again, not knowing why, he stood at the top of the steps, watching for a long time that slender form that seemed floating in the air, and the long shadow, gliding over the glassy pond. Once more he sat down—sat motionless, incapable of thought, plunged in the abysses

of his own mind; and from under his half-closed lids there shot a light that was ever increasingly painful.

"She despises me!" he said, her eyes again present to him, and her arms falling limp in the hurricane rush of her realizations. He tried to laugh it off, but the laugh never came from his lips, for he felt his heart bitter exceedingly, and full of weariness not to be borne.

With heavy steps, he made for the grotto. Lucy awaited him there. She flew to his arms, heedless of anything else in the world.

"Have a care! the place is full of people! We might be seen," he said in a voice husky with irritation, looking round him on every side.

"Forgive me, please forgive me!—Have you had long to wait?"

"For a whole hour. I was just going away, for I cannot lose so much time."

"Let's go to the greenhouse—under the cherry-trees. No one is ever there," she said in subdued, beseeching tones.

They went there, walking so close together that their hips touched. Lucy often glanced at his eyes and pressed still closer, smiling sweetly with lips hotly craving for kisses; her breath came short and fast, with the heat of the afternoon and the longing for passionate delight.

That day she was most temptingly beautiful, attired in a gown of Bordeaux silk, so light and so bewilderingly soft, with rustling folds, that her figure and magnificent shoulders, her splendidly developed breast and hips, appeared to the fullest advantage. Shining with beauty, health, and youth, her face, with its wonderful warm olive complexion, peeped out of a great collar *à la Médicis*, and her marvellous violet eyes, set off by the jet-black brows and lashes, burned so bright and so strongly that Charles began to feel her passionate glances reflected in his own face. They fired him with their glow, and his strong resolve of breaking with her was enfeebled. The loss of those lips, so brimming over with delight and burning with kisses—of those looks and ardent sighs, which inflamed him with their fire—of those whispers

and pressures, so full of the most ardent passion—of all that delight in her which he felt was not exhausted yet—all these losses were too painful to think of.

He set to kissing her passionately, though with the memory yet present within him of the bitter meeting with Mrs. Likiert. She returned kiss for kiss, so long, so tempestuously, and with such fire, that she all at once grew deadly pale, and fell half swooning into his arms.

"O Charles! I am dying, dying!" she whispered with pallid lips, on which still dwelt the whole immensity of her mighty raptures. She threw her arms round him, and after resting there a while, her eyes half closed and sighing with desire, she said: "I love you.—Do not kiss me.—I feel so faint, so faint!"

When at last within the greenhouse, hidden from curious eyes by a curtain of boughs that hung very low, she sank down on a wheelbarrow that stood by the wall, and laid her head on his shoulder (for he had sat down by her side), and remained silent for a long while. His arms were round her waist; he caressed her face, now pallid under the olive tint, and rained kisses on her half-closed eyelids, out of which tears were beginning to trickle.

"But what is this? why are you weeping so?"

"I do not know, I do not know," she murmured, and the tears ran faster down her cheeks, and sobs shook her frame more and more strongly.

He wiped her eyes, kissed and comforted her, but all to no purpose. She still cried like an injured child, and could not be consoled. Time and again she would smile, but then another burst of weeping would darken her violet eyes, and the smile was no more.

Charles began to feel uneasy, and then impatient. His fiery love had gone, quenched by her tears; he sat there, frozen, utterly confused by such a fit of hysteria—or was it only nerves?

He asked again what ailed her; but in vain. She answered nothing, laid her head upon his breast, clasped him in her arms, and wept by fits and starts.

After a time she left off, dried her tears, looked at her face in a tiny pocket-mirror, set her hat straight, and, watching his clouded face, said very low: "Charles, have I offended you?"

"What do you mean? Not at all. I was only uneasy, seeing you cry so."

"Do forgive me. I could not help it, I could not. I had been waiting so long, so long expecting to see you—and was so enchanted at the thought! For I am unhappy, Charles, very unhappy at home.—Take me away, Charles; kill me if you wish to, but do not let me go back among them!" she cried out loud, catching hold of his hands with a despairing gesture, looking greedily into his eyes and begging for mercy and rescue.

"Be calm, Lucy, you are beside yourself, your nerves are terribly unstrung; you do not even know what you want to have."

"I do know, Charles, I do know: it is you that I want! I cannot, I cannot bear to be with them any more!" she cried with flashing eyes.

"But what can I do for you as to that?" he said crossly, and a dark, angry shadow rose for an instant in his grey eyes.

She started up at his words, as though at an abyss opening before her, and stared at him in terrified stupor. "Charles, you do not love me! You have never loved me!" she stammered with trembling lips, awaiting his answer with death in her heart.

But although an answer—a direful one for her—was on the tip of his tongue, he controlled himself with an impulse that seemed like pity, fondled her, and kissed those lips that twitched with dreadful forebodings, and those eyelids that fluttered like the wings of a dying butterfly. "You are greatly excited to-day, your nerves are quite out of order. Lucy, you must control yourself, and neither say nor think of any such things, because you pain me exceedingly. Will you do so, Lucy?" he whispered, doing all he could to soften his voice.

"Yes, Charles, I will. Forgive me; I love you so tremen-

dously, and was so afraid lest you—— I could not do otherwise, I wanted to make sure."

"And now you believe in me and are quite at rest, are you not?"

"I do believe. Whom could I believe in, unless in you?" she cried most sincerely, out of the depths of her heart.

"Have you had any unpleasantness at home?"

"Yes, and how much! Every day there are a thousand unpleasantnesses. But to-day Aunt came from Chenstohova, and does nothing but complain that we have no children. You hear that, Charles? All the family is against me, and always loading me with reproaches. He says he will divorce me, for his family make him ashamed on my account. They are to meet in council to-day, and Aunt proposes taking me to Brody, where there is a *tsadyk*, a sort of rabbi, who can advise what should be done."

"And you agreed?"

"I had to. I cannot resist them; I have no one to stand up for me. I was obliged," she ended, grinding her teeth under the crushing impression of her own powerlessness, and looking imploringly at Charles, with a mute appeal for salvation. But Charles moved uneasily and took out his watch.

"Do you know, Charles, they have threatened me—unless I submit to what they want—to have me divorced and sent away to some small town. Away, far away from you, where I should never see you any more!"

Struck with sudden blind terror of such an eventuality, she fell into his arms, clung to him, hugging him with all her might; and in a wild outburst of dread and love, she caught both his hands and covered them with kisses.

"We must be off now. The band is going to play. People will be here in numbers, and someone might see us."

"Let them! I love you, Charles, and am ready to declare my love before the whole world!"

"Still, one must keep up appearances."

"What would you do, if one day I came to you—to stay with you for ever?" She nestled anxiously close to him, her face transfigured by the glow of love, as she put this ques-

tion. "And," she went on to say fondly, with a kiss after every word, "we should be with each other for ever—for ever —for ever!"

"What a great baby you are! You have no idea what you are saying! Why, the very thought is madness."

"And is not all love madness?"

"It is, it is; but we must separate now," he said hastily, hearing the distant sounds of the band, floating through the thickets and the deepening twilight.

"Don't you love me, Charles?" she asked, this time lightheartedly, putting up her mouth for a kiss in reply.

But his look had a cold hard glint, and his voice sounded so harsh, as he answered, that she started and shrank away from him, and walked on by his side in confused amazement, looking sadly at the thickets of verdure they were traversing, in which already lurked many shadows of the oncoming twilight, though shot through here and there by the keen, red rays of the setting sun. And although he assured her of his love in the sweetest voice he could assume, and kissed her tenderly at parting, she went away in sore dread, casting a sad look from afar upon her lover as he stood beneath the trees.

The band was executing a melancholy waltz, that echoed all over the vast park with a faint, gentle melody, thrilling the leaves of the trees, and the cups of the flowers that were closing. Charles walked on along the main avenue, behind the menagerie, to avoid meeting any of his acquaintances. He had perceived Horn and Kama walking hand in hand in front of him, nodding their heads in time to the music. Kama's hat was in her other hand; her hair, blown about all round her head, seemed pierced by the sunbeams as by golden pins, while they, walking westward, paused to gaze down upon Lodz from a bit of rising ground. Charles, taking a side street to avoid meeting them, went off full speed in a cab.

CHAPTER IV

COME in and take tea. Aunt will be cross with me if I come home without you," Kama said to Horn, who had seen her to Spacerova Street.

"I am in a hurry. I must look Malinovski up. He has not been at my lodgings these three days, and I am anxious about him."

"Good. But when you have got hold of him, you must both come in and take tea."

"That's all right."

They shook hands in good fellowship, and parted. But Kama called him back from the front door. He stopped and turned round.

"Tell me, you feel better now, don't you? You are not so downcast as you were?"

"Better, much better; and I owe it all to your kindness."

"You have got to be in good health—and not feel miserable—and go to Shaya's to-morrow. All right?" she said, stroking the young man's face with a sort of motherly caress.

He kissed the tips of her fingers and made his way home, walking slowly and with something of apathy, though he was really concerned at Malinovski's protracted absence. They were lodging together, and he had come to know him well during the past few months, while waiting to find a situation.

Malinovski was out, the rooms were empty. And it was abundantly clear that the friends were hard up—very much so. Horn had quarrelled with his father, who, determined to bring his obstinate son back home, had cut off his allowance.

He had not succeeded. Young Horn had stubbornly re-

solved to get on by his own efforts. Meantime he had lived on credit, getting loans, selling his furniture bit by bit, and so on. Also on his love for Kama. It filled all his being with an ineffably sweet charm, like that June night, now falling over the town, full of deep silences and with the stars—those dream-flashes—twinkling athwart the ether waves, eternal like her love, and like it not of the earth.

He ceased to think about himself, having resolved to go and seek out his friend. More than once had Malinovski thus mysteriously disappeared—to return pale and haggard, refusing to say where he had been; but never had he been absent for so long.

Horn went round to all those of his acquaintances who were likely to know something, but no one had seen Malinovski for several days. And he did not wish to make Adam's parents uneasy by telling them; at any rate, they should be last called upon.

The thought came to him of asking at the Yaskulskis', where Malinovski went very frequently. They now lived in one of the newly built lanes between the railway, the forest, and Scheibler's factory. This lane was as yet partly fields, partly rubbish-heaps, and only to some extent part of the town; and it ran in a crooked line amongst green corn, mounds of dust carted thither from the town, and deep sand-pits. Certain vulgar four-storey houses, jerry-built, of brick without plaster, showed their red walls beside other little wooden huts and shanties of boards, put together anyhow and used for storing goods. At the foot of an eminence of no great height, beyond which ran the lane, a stream of turbid water, contaminated by impurities from factories and mills, infected the air with horrible exhalations. It formed the boundary between town and country, and wound among the fences set up and the rubbish shot out there by the town.

The Yaskulskis lived close to the forest, in a half-ruined wooden cabin, with several windows in front, several outhouses, and a loft with a dormer-window in the first storey, which was very lop-sided. They were considerably better

off now. The father earned five roubles a week at Borowiecki's factory, now building, and his wife managed a small grocery store, owned by a baker, and got for her services her lodgings free and ten roubles monthly.

Tony was sitting in front of the store, wrapped in a blanket, and looking up dreamily and languidly to the crescent of the moon, just emerging from behind a cloud and silvering the zinc-plated roofs, wet with dew, and the chimneys of the town.

"Is Joe at home?" Horn inquired, grasping the dry hand of the consumptive boy.

"He is," Tony answered with an effort, still holding the other's hand.

"Do you feel any better now than in winter?"

The boy said, pointing to the moon, and staring with hollow eyes: "Can one not get there?"

"Perhaps—when one is dead," Horn replied, hastily going into the shop.

"I feel how awfully quiet it must be up there," the boy said, shuddering all over; and yet a smile of grim, potent, dreary yearning passed over his thin face. He remained silent, letting his arms drop. Resting his head against the door he sat by, he plunged his soul into the infinite spaces through which the silver crescent of the moon was gliding.

Joe was sitting at the back of the shop, in a tiny room stuffed with beds and sticks of furniture, and so close that even the opening of both door and window did but little to make the air fresher.

"Is it long since you saw Malinovski?"

"He has not been here for a fortnight; I saw him last on a Sunday."

"Has Sophy been long away too?"

"She does not come to see us any more; Mother is offended with her."

Looking with no great interest at the room, and the shop, with its bright rows of milk-cans, Horn considered where he was likely to come across Adam Malinovski, and after a few more breaths of that stifling air, saturated with dust,

smoke, and the odour of bread, took his leave, with a bit of pleasantry: "Have you got hold of another love-letter yet?"

"Oh yes, I have!" he answered, turning very red.

"Well, I'm off."

"I'll go with you."

"What?" Horn asked in jest; "have you a date?"

"I have, I have!—But don't talk so loud; mother might overhear us."

He dressed hurriedly and went out into the darkling street.

The heat of that June night had driven the folk out of houses and hovels. They were sitting in narrow passages, on thresholds, outside the houses, in the sand upon the road, or at the open windows, through which the low-ceilinged little rooms, packed close with bedsteads and truckle-beds, and noisy with swarming humanity, were plainly visible. There were no lamps in the lane; the moon gave it light, as did the scanty rays from windows, open taverns, and shops. In the middle of the road, bands of children were rolling about. From one of the more distant taverns a drinking chorus boomed forth, mingling with the sounds of a concertina, playing a Cracovienne dance-tune in some garret upstairs, and with the rumble of a passing train not far off.

"Where is your trysting-place?" Horn asked, when they had got out into the lane and were walking along a foot-path, that ran townwards across a large potato-field.

"Not far: close to the church."

"Well, success to you!" And Horn walked on to Adam's parents to find out about him.

On entering their lodgings, he found a storm raging within. The mother, standing in the middle of the room, was crying out at the top of her voice. Sophy, close to the stove, wept hysterically, and Adam sat at the table with his face hidden in his hands.

Horn, who had gone in, shrank back at once in dismay. Adam went out after him.

"My dear fellow," he whispered excitedly, "I beg and

pray you, wait for me at the front door for a few minutes," and went back into the lodgings.

His mother was screaming shrilly: "I ask you once more, where have you been these three days?"

"I have told you, Mother. I was with some acquaintances in the country near Piotrkov."

"Sophy, do not tell lies," Adam said sharply, his gentle, sea-green eyes now gleaming angrily. "I know where you have been," he added in a lower voice.

"Well then, where?" the girl cried in terror, raising her eyes full of tears.

"At Kessler's!" he replied very low, but in such a tone of despair that his mother wrung her hands, and Sophy started out of her chair and stood still for some time in the middle of the room, looking round with rebellious eyes.

"Yes! I was at Kessler's. He is my lover! So there!" she shouted, so shamelessly that her mother staggered back to the window, and Adam jumped up from his chair. She stood thus mute for a moment, staring boldly in their faces; but presently a nerve-shattering storm came over her with such effect that she collapsed under it, and, unable to stand, dropped into her former seat and burst into tears, all her body trembling.

Her mother, who had somewhat come to herself by this time, was at her side instantly. Seizing her by the arm, she dragged her to the lamp in an outburst of indignation: "You, Kessler's mistress! You, my daughter!"

Pressing her hands to her temples, she set to pacing the chamber, shrieking, in unbearable pain. "O Jesus! O Mary!" she cried, and wrung her hands in despair.

Again she went up to her and shook the girl with all her might, saying in a voice husky with agitation: "So, all your excursions to your aunt's, your outings, your appointments with other girls at the theatre, your new dresses—*that's* what they all meant!—Ah, now, now I understand!—And I allowed it all, I was so blind! O Jesus! O Mary!—My God, Thou everlasting One, punish me not for my blindness;

punish me not, O merciful Lord, for the sins of my children; their guilt is not mine—not mine!" she cried out in fervent supplication, falling down in profound sorrow before the image of Our Lady, in front of which an oil-lamp was glimmering.

Then she rose from her knees, very pale; her face was swollen, threatening, implacably stern.

"Off with that velvet this instant!" she vociferated.

Sophy was dazed and failed to understand; and her mother pulled off the velvet bodice she wore, tearing it to strips.

"The mark of your shame, you street-walker!" And, maddened by the craving to destroy, she tore all her daughter's other garments to pieces, and trampled them under her feet. Rushing to the chest of drawers, she flung out of it and tore up everything that was Sophy's, the latter looking on wild-eyed at the ravage wrought, or uttering broken sentences:

"He loves me—has promised me marriage—I could not endure to stay there.—Live all my life a factory girl, and die one?—I will not!—Dear Mother, dearest Mother mine, forgive me! Have mercy on me—I beseech you!" she cried aloud, falling at her feet, all her strength of resistance completely broken.

"You may go to your Kessler now. I have no daughter any more," her mother said in a hard voice, opening the door wide, and shrinking from her daughter's touch.

Sophy, suddenly thunder-struck by the dark horror of her mother's words and the black corridor she saw yawning wide open before her, started back, and fell at her feet again, screaming horribly in unspeakable fear. She caught at her hands, her dress, clutched at her knees, crawled towards her on the floor, and in a voice broken with sobs, begged frantically for mercy and forgiveness. "Kill me, but do not turn me out! I cannot bear it; kill me!—Brother Adam!—Oh my father, mercy, mercy!"

"Off with you instantly; if I see you again, I drive you out like a dog and give you up to the police!" the inexor-

able mother hissed, turned to stone by the bitterness at her heart. That intense pain within her had slain everything —even mercy itself.

Adam looked on and listened, externally unmoved; but the keen glitter of anger had died out of his sea-green eyes, and they were moist.

"Away with you—go away!" her mother cried again, in steely tones.

Then Sophy rose to her feet, and rushed with a piercing shriek out of the room into the passage. The neighbours opened their doors and peeped; she ran out, seen by every family in the house, downstairs and into the yard, where she crouched down under a blossoming acacia, and fainted away in a spasm of sheer animal terror.

Adam ran down after her, brought her to, and said in a gentle brotherly voice: "Sophy, come to me; I will not forsake you."

She answered nothing, but struggled to escape from him—to get away and be gone. He calmed her, though he found it hard work; wrapped her up in a shawl that he brought out of the house—for the girl's clothes were all in strips—and, taking her firmly by the hand, led her to a cab.

Horn, who had been waiting at the front door, now came up to them.

"It so happens that Sophy will be staying with me for some days; could you not find a lodging elsewhere for yourself meanwhile?"

"Certainly, I will go to Vilchek's; he has plenty of room."

They drove on in silence; only, as they passed before the Kesslers' mansion, Sophy clung desperately to her brother, shedding tears.

"Do not weep: we shall settle everything. Do not weep: Mother will come round, and I'll see Father myself," he said kindly; he kissed her wet eyes, and stroked her dishevelled hair.

So much comforted did she feel by his kindness that she put her arms round him, laid her head on his bosom, and

—indifferent to Horn's presence—complained in incoherent whispers of her unhappy fate.

They immediately prepared her brother's room for her; he was to take Horn's room. She shut herself up, and would not come out for tea, though Horn had made some for her. Adam took it to her. She drank a little: then threw herself down on her bed, and went to sleep in an instant.

Adam went in several times to look after her; he covered her up as best he could, and wiped her face with a handkerchief; for though she slept, the tears welled up through her eyelids. Then he went back to Horn, and said: "Can you guess at what has taken place?"

"No, I cannot. Say nothing about it, please, for I see how painful it is to you. I am going at once."

"Wait a few minutes still.—You have—you must have heard things said about Sophy?"

Horn replied evasively: "I never take any notice of gossip, nor listen to any."

Malinovski, rising to his feet, said abruptly: "It was the truth, and no gossip!"

"And what do you intend to do?" he inquired with deep sympathy.

"To go straight to Kessler," Adam said with stern resolution; and his sea-green eyes took a steely glint, like the barrel of the revolver he carried in his pocket.

"It will be useless. With a brute you cannot settle matters a brute does not understand."

"I can but try—and if I fail, then——"

"What then?" Horn asked him hastily, struck by the tone of menace in his friend's voice.

"Then we shall take a different line—and see what comes of it."

Horn wanted to explain, but Adam would not hear. On parting at the door, he grasped his friend's hand, and went round to the Kesslers'.

The young man was not in, and no one could tell where he was to be found just then. With what hate he viewed the splendid building, its turrets gleaming in the moonlight, its

gilded balconies, its windows, with the white blinds all drawn down!—He would, he thought, step in to his father.

Old Malinovski, watchful and attentive as usual, was busy with his huge driving-wheel, that like some weird gigantic bird was in motion in the dark vibrating tower, its cage; disappearing beneath the floor, coming up out of the shadow, glittering with the cold sparkling glitter of steel, and revolving with such immense velocity that the eye could see no part of it distinctly. So tremendous was the noise of the machinery, that old Malinovski's shout in his son's ear was but a whisper.

"Have you found her?"

"I brought her home this evening."

His father fixed his eyes upon him. After a while he went to the machine, dropped oil in various places, consulted the manometer, cleaned the pistons that had begun to work noisily and to drip with oil. Then he called out through a tube to the mechanicians below, and, returning to his son, said in a strangled voice: "Kessler!" and bared his teeth threateningly.

"Yes. But he belongs to me. You let him alone, Father," Adam said energetically.

"Fool! I have business with him—weighty business. Don't venture to touch him, mind you!"

"I mind; but I'll do as I've said."

"You dare!" the old man growled fiercely, raising a huge grimy fist as though to strike him.

"Where is she now?"

"Her mother has turned her out of doors."

The old man drew a quick breath between clenched teeth. His brown eyes looked deep down under his bushy brows, and threw a dangerous shadow on his grey, gaunt face. He bent down again and set himself to tend the wheel, which was singing—roaring—the frenzied hymn of enraged imprisoned force, working at furious speed between the trembling walls. Athwart a tiny dust-coated window in the tower, there streamed a silver streak of moonlight, in which, like some grey phantom, the monster whirled and howled.

Adam, unable to get anything else out of his father, was preparing to go. He was followed by him and stopped at the very threshold.

"See to her. After all, she is of our blood."

"I have taken her home to my lodgings."

At the words, his father embraced him and pressed him to his heart. Adam and his father looked each into the depths of the other's soul, the one with those gentle sea-green eyes of his, the other with brown eyes tear-dimmed and misty. They looked with intense unfathomable love, and parted without a word.

The old man again resumed his watch over the machinery, wiping his eyes with oil-stained hands.

CHAPTER V

MOST simple affair—and pure gold, I tell you! I have purchased a piece of land which must, look you! which *must* be bought by Grünspan at my own price," Stanley Vilchek was telling Horn on the following morning. The latter had spent the night in his rooms.

"Why must he?" Horn inquired drowsily.

"Because the land is contiguous to Grünspan's on two sides—behind and laterally. On the other side there is Shaya's factory, and the street is in front. Grünspan wants to enlarge his works, and cannot for want of room. He will be here to-day, and his nose will be jolly well put out of joint. You'll see, ha ha! For three years he has been at it, haggling over this very bit of land, only offering a hundred roubles more every year to the owner, because he wished to get it cheap. He could 'wait'; he was 'in no hurry.' Now, I happened to hear of this, cut in, gave the man a good price, and bought the land without anybody's knowledge. And now it is I who shall wait and not be in a hurry." He laughed heartily, blinking and rubbing his hands, and passing his tongue over his big lips.

"How much land have you got?"

"There are four acres in all.—Fifty thousand roubles, as safe as if I had them in my pocket!"

"If there's any mistake, it will be a big one," Horn said laughing, somewhat startled by the greatness of the amount.

"In business matters I never make a mistake. Grünspan has to build two pavilions that will employ about two thou-

sand hands. Now think of this: if he built them anywhere else—even, suppose, only two hundred yards off—the expenses of building and administration and getting them into working order would be twice as great.—Will you have any more tea?"

"Please, provided the tea is hot.—But, I say, your cups are dreadfully disreputable for a future millionaire!" Horn remarked, tapping a cracked cup with his spoon.

"Oh, that's all one," was the offhand answer; "I shall drink from a Sèvres service some day.—I'll leave you alone for a few minutes," he added, peeping out of the window and then going into the passage. Several wretchedly dressed old women, with baskets on their arms, had appeared among the withered cherry-trees that stood in front of the house.

Horn meanwhile surveyed the room in which the millionaire *in posse* was living at present.

It was a mere peasant's cabin, with whitewashed walls, of tumble-down aspect. The floor was of clay, beaten hard, and spread over with a calico floor-cloth, printed with red flowers. The windows, small and with frames all awry, had soiled curtains to shade them, and let in so little light that the room, with its miserable bits of furniture—that might have been picked up on a dust-heap—was quite shrouded in twilight, the only thing which stood out in sharp relief being a big samovar, set under a great penthouse on the usual sort of peasant's stove.

Near a score of books lay on the table, amid a litter of old iron, leather straps, reels, and samples of variously dyed cotton yarns. Horn began to look into the books, but put them aside and listened to a woman's plaintive voice outside the window.

"Will you kindly lend me ten roubles, sir? You know me, Rachel Wasserman, for a poor honest woman; and if I don't get that money to-day, I cannot do any business, nor have anything to live on for the whole week."

"I don't lend money without a deposit."

"Mr. Vilchek, you shall have the money back; by all that's holy, I swear you shall! My little ones, my husband,

my mother, are waiting for me to bring them a morsel of bread. And if you won't lend me anything, how am I to get it for them?"

"They may die like dogs for all I care!"

The poor Jewess burst out moaning: "Oh what words, what wicked words you have spoken, sir!"

Vilchek sat down on a bench by the window, and counted out the money the other women had brought him. It was all in small change, making up sums of from one to five roubles at most, pulled out of their bundles and hidden pockets.

"Gitla, this five-kopek piece is a bad one; I'll have another."

"On my conscience, it is good money. I had it from a lady who always buys oranges of me. Why should it be bad? see how it glitters," she cried, having wetted the piece and rubbed it bright with her apron.

"Quick, give me another, I have no time to spare."

"Mr. Vilchek," the Wasserman woman said, persistent in her entreaties, "you are such a kind gentleman, you will make me a loan."

"Stein, fifteen kopeks are missing here!" he ejaculated, turning to a dwarfish old Jewess with a shaky head under a greasy cap.

"Missing? It's impossible. My five roubles are there complete; I have counted right."

"That will do; make up the money. You always say that, Stein, and are always short. We know you of old."

She tried to prove she had paid all, which made Vilchek so furious that he took the money and flung it down on the sand at her feet. The woman uttered a woeful cry, picked it up, and put it back on the bench.

Rachel Wasserman approached Vilchek once more, and, touching his elbow with her finger-tips, said to him in a low tearful voice: "I am waiting, I am waiting for your Honour to be merciful."

"Without proper security," he said, "you shall not get one rouble. Go and borrow from your son-in-law."

"From that scoundrel? Let me not hear his name. I gave him a cool forty roubles, cash down, for my daughter's wedding portion; and in six months the rascal had spent it all! Spent it all, he had. Oh, why, why did he spend such a sum?"

Vilchek paid no attention to her complaints, but went on taking back the capital with the interest for the week before, and lending it out again for the next, noting down names and sums very accurately. He was indifferent to all complaints, and treated that lot of wretched creatures with unconcealed contempt. Not the least shadow of pity came to his heart at the sight of those eyes, red from the burning suns and biting frosts, of those bodies clad in rags, those faces that bore the marks of eternal care and hunger, looking out from beneath their wigs and foul kerchiefs—of the whole array of misery displayed there in the hot sunshine, amongst the dried-up and dying trees, only some of which bore green leaves at all, and among the grassy plots overgrown with weeds—tall stalks of mullein and of burdock flaunting and waving their pale verdure in the air.

Farther on, beyond the road, the town spread out its rows of red-brick houses, chimneys, and roofs, on which the sunbeams played. Clattering and clamour and whistling sounds began to fill the garden with ceaseless din, and to make the crooked walls of Vilchek's dwelling tremble.

Horn had looked on at the swarm of wretched beings that stood outside the house, and had with increasing indignation been initiated into the details of Vilchek's money-grubbing. He could not bear it any longer. No sooner had the latter settled the last loan and returned to the cabin than he silently put on his hat and made for the door.

"Don't go yet."

"I must be at Shaya's. But first of all, a word of truth for you. What I have just seen and heard has made me abhor you, Mr. Vilchek. Pray look upon me, and all those whom I associate with, as strangers—as men who henceforth do not know you."

As he spoke, he raised his voice, and was about to leave

the place with a look of disgust, when Vilchek darted between him and the door.

"I will not let you go away so; you must hear my side of the question!" he cried, purple with fury, but in a firm, quiet voice.

Horn looked him straight in the eyes, and then, still with his hat on, sat down, saying curtly: "I am listening."

"I wish only to explain one point. You no doubt take me for a usurer. I am not. I am only an agent of another—of Grosglik.—All the responsibility for what I do is his; all the profit too. You are the first whom I have told of this. Why? Because I have never hitherto required to justify my doings to anyone."

"Then why do so now? I am not a judicial investigator, and surely no one can force you."

"I do not choose to be condemned unjustly. You may count me amongst your acquaintances or not; please yourself. But I object to being looked upon as a usurer."

"You may rest satisfied that we shall not trouble about you."

"No more than I do about your contempt, though I hear it plainly in your voice."

"Then why are you detaining me now?"

"I was. I am no longer," Vilchek said, stressing his words. "I told you in self-defence that I was merely Grosglik's agent, laying out his money for his profit. That I do not act for him gratis goes without saying."

"But who, for ever so large a salary, would consent to rob the poor?"

"This is mere talk for drawing-rooms, in presence of young ladies; it sounds nicely and obliges one to nothing."

"Ah, Vilchek, it is not mere talk; it is common honesty."

"Call it as you like; I shall not dispute about words. You hold me as a villain—say I help Grosglik to rob the poor, do you? Well, I'll prove that the villain you call me does more for these same poor than all your intellectuals and waifs of nobility put together.—Pray look over this ledger. It contains the amounts of the loans and their interests

during the past year. It was kept by the man whom I replaced. And here is the ledger which I have been keeping since last New Year. Now compare the amounts: loans and profits."

Horn mechanically cast a glance at the two ledgers, and saw that the profits were in the second ledger only half as considerable as in the first.

"What does this mean? How can it be?"

"It means that I charge one hundred and fifty per cent less interest than the other man did. It means—so far as figures can speak—that I give these poor people—out of my own pocket!—from one to two hundred roubles monthly; for this one hundred fifty per cent formed my supplementary remuneration. This I have given up, and seek no praise for my self-denial."

"Then you don't rob them of their money yourself? Really, you are very good to them indeed!"

"Pshaw! you talk like a man who has no idea of business."

"Not so: as a man who sees no heroism in taking a hundred and fifty instead of three hundred per cent."

"Well, let's say no more," Vilchek exclaimed, and with a disappointed gesture flung both ledgers into the iron safe that stood in a corner; and, drumming on the table, he cast his eyes on the cherry-trees waving outside the window.

He was in an evil temper. Horn would spread the fact of his extortioner's doings all through Lodz, and so would close upon him the doors both of the Colony, and of several other houses that he frequented.

Horn regarded him with attentive interest, forgetting to go; his indignation had, during his talk with Vilchek, given place to curiosity. He now appeared to him in quite another light: there was in the man an intense force which he had never yet noticed, though indeed he had hitherto paid no particular attention to him.

"You are eyeing me as if you saw me for the first time."

"I confess this is the first time I have seen anything worth notice in you!"

"A queer sample of humanity, eh? A boor with sordid instincts: ugly, mean, and a blackguard! But what can I do, my good sir? I was born, not in a palace, but in a hovel. I have no good looks, no winning ways with me; I am not one of your set. And so my good qualities—if I have any—are reckoned as vices, all of them. Ah!" he added, his elfin eyes twinkling ironically, "but that does not prevent you gentlemen from borrowing of me!"

"If you please, sir, Wasserman has come again," said the servant, popping his head in at the door.

"She may come in, Voytek.—Let the men go off to the station. Give Antek this invoice, and say I shall be there in half an hour."

In she came, bearing a sabbath candlestick and a large set of amber jewels as security for the ten roubles. These Vilchek paid her at once, deducting in advance one rouble as interest on the week's loan.

"Is that what you call usury? Why, if I had not given her the money, she would have starved. There are in Lodz multitudes of such women, who live on the money they borrow from us; and each of them has children—a mother—a husband—incompetent for anything, or only good to say prayers."

"So, then, society ought to feel thankful for such assiduous benevolence?"

"It might at least let us alone, when we serve it disinterestedly." He laughed a frank but very cynical laugh.

"Mr. Grünspan, sir, is coming in," the servant said, popping in again.

"Wait here a bit longer; you'll witness a very funny scene."

Horn had no time to protest, for Grünspan entered at that moment.

"Ah, good day, Mr. Vilchek!—But you have a visitor; perhaps I may be unwelcome," he said, standing on the threshold with outstretched hand and a cigar in his mouth.

"Pray come in.—My friend Mr. Horn," he replied, introducing him.

Grünspan at once removed his cigar, and glanced at Horn with keen scrutiny.

"Have you been employed at Bucholc's?" he inquired, rather condescendingly. "And are you a son of Mr. Horn of Warsaw, of the firm Horn and Weber?" he went on to ask before any reply to the former question was possible.

"I am."

"Pleased to meet you. Your father and I have dealings together." He extended his hand most graciously, and touched Horn's with the tips of his fingers. "I have dropped in to see you, Mr. Vilchek, in a neighbourly way, as I was passing by, going for a walk."

"Very nice weather to-day. Pray be seated," Vilchek said with great eagerness, unable to conceal the pleasure given him by Grünspan's call.

The visitor sat down, having first drawn apart the tails of his long gaberdine, stretched forward his legs, encased in high boots up to the knees, and lifted up his head and his well-fed face, glistening with fat. His black beady eyes again and again darted to and fro about the room, and out of the window into the garden, and, peering forth at the red walls of his own factory, which stood just beyond, returned to view Horn's features and Vilchek's, the former's with indifference, the latter's with increasing uneasiness. He blew dense clouds of smoke all about him, cleared his throat, fidgeted about on his chair, and was evidently at a loss how to begin.

Vilchek gave him no help, but paced the room to and fro, smiled, licked his big lips, and threw significant looks at Horn, who sat there, sullenly attentive to Vilchek's words and demeanour.

"It is agreeably cool in your house," Grünspan said, to begin the interview, wiping his moist forehead with a checked handkerchief.

"My windows are shaded by the garden trees, and the sun cannot come in. Have you seen my garden, Mr. Grünspan?"

"I have never had time. When could I see it? A busy man

like myself is tied down to his business as a horse to the cart it draws."

"If you like, we may go out into the open air, and I'll show you the whole of my domain. Shall we?"

"All right, all right," Grünspan said eagerly, and led the way.

They passed into a long, narrow courtyard in which were many hollows and dunghills, several ancient washing-tubs, heaps of old iron, iron plates, and cracked pottery, with which a couple of men were loading some large wagons. On one side of the yard were a few ramshackle sheds, built of rotten boards nailed together and thatched; within them there stood barrels of cement. On the other side were stables not less wretched and decayed, that reached as far as Grünspan's factory wall.

"Oh, they're not racehorses!" Vilchek laughed, seeing Horn peep into the stables and view with pain the sorry hacks, lame and languishing, that stood in their stalls with drooping heads.

"Not a very fragrant smell here," said the factory-owner.

They next visited a bit of completely bare field—pure sand—from which the winds had blown away all the vegetable mould, leaving the place as yellow as if painted with ochre.

High mounds of rubbish, dumped down there from the neighbouring town, with lean dogs scratching and digging holes in them, rose along the factory wall, which ran half the length of the field.

"Quite a land of gold. Onions would grow there wonderfully well!" Vilchek observed, smiling sarcastically.

"Well, there's a pretty bit of landscape to be seen from here," Horn put in, pointing to the line of forest land belonging to the town, all bathed in bluish opal mists raised by the sun, and to the waving cornfields with red long-necked factory chimneys behind them.

"A landscape? what do you mean? All that's only building plots for sale," Grünspan cried, nettled by Vilchek's ironical talk.

"You are right. But my plot is the finest of them all. It's close to your factory, and almost inside the town. It might be laid out as a first-class park."

"Lay it out, and my workmen will have somewhere to rest on holidays."

They went back and sat down on the bench.

Horn took his leave and withdrew. The others sat awhile mutely feigning to enjoy the "fresh" air, saturated with the stench of smoke and the acrid exhalations from ditches running with factory waste-products.

In a long, unbroken line, brick-laden carts were passing on the road, and the stifling reddish dust that rose as they passed was settling down on the cherry-trees and on the grass. From Grünspan's factory there unceasingly arose volumes of black smoke that rolled about over the orchard trees, spreading a murky grey canopy above them, through which the sun was hardly to be seen.

"There was," Grünspan began, "a—a little business I was thinking of transacting with you."

"And I know what it is; my friend Moritz Welt told me."

"Oh, since you know what it is," the manufacturer said in an offhand way, "let's speak briefly and to the point."

"Very well.—How much do you offer for this plot of land, which you absolutely need?"

"Need it? I don't. I only thought of making the purchase so that I might pull down your hideous cabin, and fell these trees, which spoil the view of the forest from my house. I am so fond of forests!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Vilchek roared.

"You have a pleasant laugh; good laughter is an important factor in good health," Grünspan remarked, keeping the irritation he felt well down. "But my time is precious, Mr. Vilchek," he added, rising from the bench.

"And so is mine: I must be off to the station."

"Then we do business?"

"What do you offer?"

"Let's come to terms quick; I love that.—Twice as much for your rubbish-heap as you paid that peasant."

Saying this, he held out his hand for the other to grasp.

"Mr. Grünspan, don't trifle and waste time."

"Five thousand roubles, and in ready money."

"Mr. Grünspan, I am much obliged to you for your neighbourly visit; but I am really in a hurry. My horses are now waiting at the station."

"Here's my last word: ten thousand, at once, cash.—Done?" He caught the young man's open hand and struck it in token of agreement.

"Not done! I've no time for child's-play."

Grünspan recoiled some paces. "This—this is robbery!" he said in a rage.

"Mr. Grünspan, you are surely not in good health."

"I take my leave!"

"Till our next meeting!" Vilchek retorted, grinning with joy to see the big factory-owner, who in his fury had thrown his cigar away, and was scuttling through the orchard so fast that the tails of his gaberdine flew out like wings on either side, swishing against the trees, and catching on the thorns of a gooseberry-bush.

"Oh, you'll come back, you will!" Vilchek jeered, rubbing his hands with amusement.

He drank a cup of tea, put all the small change away into the safe, dressed himself up in fine clothes, scented himself, and went off to the station—a smug and self-satisfied dandy.

CHAPTER VI

A LOFTY iron railing, sustained by a row of stone pillars at regular intervals, and representing the intertwined stalks of plants, and flowers with gilt petals, separated Shaya Mendelsohn's factory from the street. Within this very artistic piece of ironwork there lay several grass-plots of blackened grass, on which many a bed of glaring purple peonies stood out in bright relief. The main factory building was somewhat in the background: a huge mass, four storeys high and of unplastered brick, having at each of its corners a sort of mediæval bastion, abundantly machicolated. The great entrance-gate, almost a masterpiece of ironwork, that made a break in the railings on one side of the main building, led to the large central courts, divided by four-storey pavilions into quadrangles that formed a grating. From the midst of this, like tall poplars, the red chimneys raised their heads and rolled black veils of smoke over the mighty fortress-factory. Close to the gate, and with windows that looked out on the street, was the main office.

Somewhat intimidated, Horn entered the waiting-room, and after writing his name and his business with Shaya on a blank form the usher gave him, sat down to wait for his turn. Through the open door which led to the office, there were visible in the flickering yellowish gas-light some score or so of heads bending over desks, and beyond them a line of narrow windows that opened on the dark-red factory walls. Standing out among the sombre wainscoted walls were rows of black wooden chests, that wore a truly funereal aspect.

A pungent smell of raw yarn and of chlorine pervaded

the close hot air of the room. The silence was oppressive. Everyone moved automatically, walked on tiptoe, spoke in whispers; but the great far-off muttering of the factory shook the walls and made the gas-lights tremble.

There was a group of men in the centre of the waiting-room, who stood talking in whispers to one another, and paying no heed to the crowd that sat round on benches, or lurked in the shadows of the chests or in the recesses of the windows—a crowd of people of every class, all seeking work. These, whenever the door to Shaya's room opened, would start up instinctively to get a peep into the apartment where the man of millions was reigning. The door would close swiftly and noiselessly, and they would fall back into their places, to gaze vacantly out of the window at the pink acacia blossoms, through which the outlines of the Mendelsohn's palace were visible, with their balustrade gildings, glittering in the bright June sun, and their balconies, and their Venetian windows.

Every now and then the private-room door would open and the usher would call out some name or other. And then the person named would either start up from his seat to respond eagerly to the call, or move slowly and deliberately out of the group of men who stood there, towards the private room. Every now and then, too, there would come out some important business man or some big merchant, accompanied to the door with all the respect due to his money-bags; every now and then, also, there crept out some poverty-stricken fellow, who, pale and with tottering steps, hurried away, looking at no one. Frequently, moreover, there would pass through the waiting-room officials of various sorts and degrees, who had business in the office.

Those in the waiting-room could hear confused murmurs of talk inside, with sometimes a telephone ring and call. Sometimes even the husky voice of Shaya himself would resound beyond the door; and then upon all in the office there descended a deep, stony silence, and not a sound was heard but the gas-lights sizzling and fizzling, or the rattling

of the wagons going about the precincts of the factory.

Suddenly the private room opened, giving passage to a tall man, with a small head, a great stomach, and thin bow-legs. This was Stanislas Mendelsohn, Shaya's eldest son and head manager of the factory, rushing into the office to make an onslaught upon a certain raw-boned clerk.

"I demand of you: what does this mean?" he bawled out at the very top of his voice, thrusting a passport-book into the clerk's startled face, which turned the colour of chamois-leather.

"Mr. Director, this passport was handed to me for you by the Passport Office; as it was given me, so I have brought it."

"You are a man without understanding, without delicacy. To bring me such a preposterous thing is mere intentional chicanery! What! have you not read it?"

"I have, but since they have written: 'Samuel Shayevich Mendelsohn, with his wife Rachel, alias Regina,' it is out of my power to prevent them from doing so."

"You are nothing but an ass, I tell you!—Take a train at once to Piotrkov, and bring me back a passport fit for a human being. Expense is no object, but I tell you I must get it by noon to-morrow, for to-morrow I am starting by express train. So stir your stumps instantly!—Why, I ask you all," he added, turning indignantly to the clerks, "don't you think it's a vile indignity, a thing both mean and ridiculous, that I, Stanislas Mendelsohn, Doctor of Philosophy and Chemistry, should have my name altered to Samuel, and my wife Regina made a Rachel of?"

The elder ones mumbled something like assent; those younger only stared at him with dull vacant eyes.

He would have talked much longer about the wrong and injustice done to him had not the electric bell in the next room sounded sharply, and Shaya's voice from within, partly drowned by angry clamour, called for his attendants to come.

"Let them but touch me, and I'll break their heads in—and yours too, you old thief! I won't stir from here till you

have paid me in full!" So shouted, with all the strength of his lungs, a short but very thickset man, brandishing a metal ruler, snatched up from a desk.

He filled up the doorway with his person, so that the door could not be shut upon him, nor he himself seized by the attendants, who, uncertain how best to deal with him, were standing a little way off.

"Let the police be called in!" Shaya said coolly, keeping away from the scene, which was witnessed by some fifteen pairs of eyes, staring through the open door.

"Mr. Piotrovski," Stanislas cried, hurrying in, "do not make a noise, for you are not going to frighten us. You have received your due, and we refuse to pay more for such miserable work. If you make a noise, we have the means to stop it."

"Give me my fifteen roubles!"

"If you are not satisfied with what we have given you, then take back your water-pipes—and take yourself off before you get hurt."

"How dare you talk to me like that, you scurvy fellow? I am not a robber like you; I am an honest tradesman. You made the agreement with me for forty roubles, and now you give only twenty-five and say I may take my work back if I am not pleased."

"Off with him to the police station!" Shaya roared.

The attendants rushed at the man on a sudden, and disarmed him. He fought and struggled like a wild beast in a trap, but the odds were too great, and he went through the waiting-room without resistance, though pouring forth loud and virulent and strongly coloured invectives, hurled at Shaya.

Quiet reigned again in Shaya's cabinet; he now looked out of the window on his park, bathed in sunlight, and the lawns, sparkling with tulip-flowers, red as bloodstones. Stanislas, hands in pockets, went whistling about the room.

"All this row has been on your account, Stanislas," the old man said, sitting down again at his desk in the centre of the room.

"Possibly. But it costs him fifteen roubles, and a couple of months in jail."

He grinned and put up his glasses; the attendant had announced Horn, whose turn it was at last.

He bowed, and silently returned Shaya's scrutinizing gaze.

"From this day on, you will be in our firm. Müller has spoken quite favourably of you, and you shall have the situation. Do you speak English?"

"At Bucholc's I was correspondent in that language."

"You will begin with us as correspondent; later we shall employ you in some other way. For the first month—on trial. Will that suit you?"

"Yes, it will, I agree," Horn said hurriedly; the prospect of a whole month's work to be done gratis was but little to his taste.

"Remain a bit; we shall have a talk. I know your father's firm."

But their conversation was cut short by the entrance of Dr. Vysocki, who had for several months been engaged as physician at Shaya's factory. He entered in a hurry, as was his wont, and came to the point directly.

"Be seated, Doctor, pray be seated," said Mendelsohn senior. But Stanislas had just taken the only available seat in the room.

"I have called you, Doctor, to ask you about a detail, but a most important one," said Mendelsohn junior, thrusting his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and extracting therefrom a bundle of crumpled prescriptions, together with a long bill. "The account and the prescriptions for last quarter have just come in. As I like to have an eye to everything, I have looked through them and come to certain conclusions, which conclusions are the business about which I sent for you."

"I am highly interested."

"The account is considerable. A thousand roubles in one quarter is in my opinion far too much."

"What am I to understand by this remark?"

"Be calm, Doctor. Please take what I have said just as

I have said it. That is to say, the account is too large; too much money is spent."

"But how am I to help that? The workmen fall ill, there are many cases, and they have to be treated."

"Quite true; but the question is, in what way?"

"And that is my business."

"Doubtless it is, and we keep you for that purpose. But what I have at heart is the manner of treatment, the method which you follow, Doctor," Stanislas said, raising his voice slightly, and not meeting Vysocki's eye, but twirling his eye-glass string round his finger. "And then comes the question, what means you employ."

"Why, those that medical science has at its disposal," Vysocki rejoined, somewhat tartly.

"Well, for instance, take the first prescription on the list. Let me see: it cost one rouble twenty. Very dear, that. Decidedly too dear for a workman who earns five roubles a week. We cannot afford it."

"Had I any remedy as efficacious and less expensive, I should have prescribed that other one, of course."

"A remedy too costly should not be employed in any case."

"Then better not treat the patient at all?"

"Calm yourself, Dr. Vysocki, and pray be seated. Let us discuss the matter like well-bred people, like gentlemen.—Here again, I see you have ordered bottles of genuine Ems water. Of these the man has drunk twenty; that comes to ten roubles. Now do you really think that the Ems water has done him any good?" he asked rather sarcastically, playing with his eye-glass string and walking about the room.

"At any rate, he has recovered, and been at work in the factory for a month."

"Glad to hear it; very glad. But—don't you think he would have got well just the same without the Ems water?"

"He might have. But it would have taken him twice the time, and required a stay in the country for a cure."

"You should then have earnestly recommended a cure

in the country; and we should have had to pay ten roubles less for the same result."

"Then what conclusion have you come to?" Vysocki asked excitedly, brushing his coat-lapels and twirling his moustache.

"Let me say first that I personally don't believe in all these drugs and medicines, nor in putting foreign bodies into the human organism. We can't afford it; that's one important point. And besides, it does no good; that's still more important. Leave sick men to nature: nature is the best doctor of all. And I should like you to follow this principle in future when you treat our people, for whose good I care more than for our own profit."

"All this you might have told me at the outset, and without so much ado!" Vysocki replied, his gorge rising.

"Well, I tell you then once more: we can't afford to go in for philanthropy."

"And I in turn tell you that—since I cannot leave the sick to be saved by nature alone, since I think it necessary to assist nature even by means of costly remedies, and since my conscience does not permit me to drive men to work before they are quite recovered—I may as well throw up my situation with your firm this very instant!"

"Why, Doctor, how unreasonable you are! We surely may talk things over, whatever they may be, openly and in a friendly way. Do sit down, do sit down, I beg. Take a cigarette, please!" So saying, Stanislas took the doctor's hat out of his hands, made him sit down again pretty nearly by force, placed a cigarette in his hand, and gave him a box of matches.

At that moment Shaya, who had just read a telegram, cried out joyfully: "Dr. Vysocki, my daughter is coming home to-day along with Miss Grünspan. I have now received a wire from Alexandrovo, and they want you to meet them at the station."

"The ladies have made haste on their way back. I understood they were not to arrive till Sunday."

"They are cracked!" Stanislas grumbled.

"It's a surprise. Mela wants to be here for Mrs. Travinska's name-day.—Well, will you go to the station?"

"With the utmost pleasure."

"Then perhaps you'll come with us at five; we shall go to the station together."

"Very well.—I am going to the infirmary now, but am returning directly."

Stanislas saw him out, and shook hands with a hearty squeeze at parting.

"You just let him alone, Stanislas," his father said. "He's Rose's protégé, and she has a weakness for the man."

"Let her; let her receive his visits, let her go for walks with him as much as she pleases; but why are we to spend money into the bargain on account of her?"

"Tut, tut, tut!—Phone to your house; say the children are to come. I'll take them to the station; they will have an airing, and I will get them some toys."

The attendant then solemnly announced the arrival of two ladies, to meet whom Stanislas made several steps forward, and Shaya rose to his feet. These were Mrs. Endelman and Mrs. Travinska, coming to beg on behalf of a fresh-air fund for sending workmen's children into the country.

Mrs. Endelman gave a splendid description of the misery of those multitudes of poor children doomed to rot in the sunless airless basements of the town. All the while she was fanning her much-powdered face very vigorously, and shifting her gold bracelets, and arranging her elaborately dressed hair, the words never ceased to flow from her livid lips, lips as worn as the stones of an ancient stairway.

Mrs. Travinska, who on that day looked more than usually beautiful, full of radiance and slender grace, kept glancing at Shaya's red-rimmed falcon's eyes and his flattened fingertips as he drummed impatiently upon the table; and now and then she would cast a look in Horn's direction.

"Royza, and what about your husband Berek? Does he give so very much to the poor?" Shaya cut in, tired of Mrs. Endelman's speech, and using her Yiddish names with malicious mockery.

This rudeness stung her to the quick. "He does, and is continually giving," she retorted; "but he never boasts of what he gives."

"Ah, well, I myself like people to know how much I give. —All right, you shall have a hundred roubles for your fresh-air fund. The children will get plenty of it for a hundred roubles.—Mr. Horn, here is an order for the sum; kindly cash it and bring the money here."

"If," Mrs. Travinska hinted, in a deep and singularly melodious voice, "you would be so good as to let us have a few remnants of cotton stuff that are not wanted, we should be very thankful; they would serve to make underwear for the children."

"What can they want with underclothing in the country? I have seen peasants' children on my estates running about almost without any clothes at all, yet they were in very good health."

"Mr. Knoll has given us five pieces of coloured cotton stuff."

"Knoll may give fifty if he chooses, but I cannot give more than six—I mean five," he corrected hurriedly—"pieces of white goods.—Stanislas, write an order for our warehouse manager to give out four pieces!" Shaya cried, in a very cross mood.

"We thank you most heartily in the name of all those poor little ones!"

"Oh, never mind about thanking. I am giving a hundred roubles and four pieces of white cotton stuff: but I'll ask you, ladies, to have this distinctly set down in the papers: that Shaya Mendelsohn has given one hundred roubles and four pieces of stuff to the fresh-air fund. I don't wish to brag, but I want people to know that I am kind-hearted."

Whereupon Mrs. Endelman proceeded to thank Shaya once more for his gift in florid terms, while Mrs. Travinska, turning to Horn, who had brought the money, said: "I have sent you an invitation to-day, but now I ask you again; pray come and see us to-morrow in the afternoon. You will not forget?"

"No indeed, and I shall be very much pleased to come."

When the ladies had gone, Stanislas remarked to Horn: "I say, you have first-rate acquaintances. This Mrs. Travinska is as nice as a box of sweets!"

"But that Royza looks like a cow with a powdered face! If her husband's intelligence were anything like her gift of the gab, they'd be twice as well off as they are," was old Shaya's verdict, as he went to meet a portly merchant, wearing a capote gathered into folds about the waist, and whose crafty eyes, very much aslant, told of Tartar blood. To him Shaya was extremely courteous, making him sit down in his own arm-chair; and Stanislas offered him a cigar, and struck a match to light it!

After him there came many and many another. Horn, who could scarcely wait till all were dispatched, then obtained leave from Shaya to go round the factory, and went to ask Adam Malinovski about his sister Sophy.

He found him in the great spinning-room, engaged on a machine that had to be repaired at once, while all the others were working at full speed.

A thin dust of cotton fibres filled the air with a greyish mist that blurred the shapes both of men and of machines, and settled down on everything there. Through the glass roof the sun poured down torrents of heat; the workmen's faces were streaming with sweat; and the air, heavily laden with smells of grease and oil, was close and oppressive.

"I am in the factory here with you from to-day on," Horn said.

"Ay, that's well," Adam replied in a low voice, bending over a part of the machinery which had just been screwed up. He said no more, for the men were just then very busy getting the whole in working order, oiling it and making trial starts, until it was connected with its transmission belt, and again began to work with the others.

Young Malinovski watched it in action for some time, then stopped it for a moment to examine the yarn it had spun; then, the result proving satisfactory, he went with Horn down the long lane of machines in motion.

"What about your sister? Did you see her at noon?" he presently asked his friend, shouting in his ear; the whirring and the humming of the machines and transmission bands, and the deep roar of the revolving wheels, made between them such a tempest of sounds that one voice could scarce be heard.

"No, no, no," he answered, sorrowfully.

They went into a small room, partitioned off by walls of glass, through which the whole of the chamber was visible, divided overhead by long lines of transmission pulleys, and beneath by the mobile contours of the machines, half hidden in the white haze of cotton dust.

"But what's amiss with you?" Horn blurted out, seeing Adam bite his lips and look moodily away into the main room.

"Nothing. What could there be amiss?"

He bent forward till his forehead touched the pane, his eyes absently fixed upon a wheel that revolved vertiginously, twinkling in the sunlight like a shield covered with silvery dust.

"Well, I must leave you.—Are you going straight home from here?"

"Do you know—she's gone!" He spoke calmly, but his lips trembled with suppressed sobs, and a dark shadow had come into his kindly, sea-green eyes.

"Gone?" Horn ejaculated vacantly.

"Gone. I had just dined, when the porter's wife brought me the key of your lodgings, saying that the girl who had been in my room had sent me word not to look for her, because she was not to be found.—You hear? She has gone to Kessler—to her lover!—Let her go!—let her do as she pleases!—she is nothing to me now.—Only I feel—a little pain—a little pain!"

Here he broke off and ran out; another spinning-machine had stopped. He hastened away to hide, not his "little pain," but the intolerable agony that tortured his heart and turned about in it, like the blade of a knife.

Horn followed him out, but was forced back to the wall,

the central passage being obstructed by a line of trucks all piled up with bales of raw cotton released from the iron hoops that had compressed them; and this cotton was being unloaded in front of the scratching- and carding-machines. As Adam did not rejoin him, and the heat was excessively great, and the noise of the machines and of the transmission belts, whirring and humming all round, dinned in his ears and grated on his nerves, Horn thought he would wait no longer, and went out.

Adam joined him at the entrance, and tearfully entreated him not to speak of the matter to anyone. He shook hands with Horn—his own was burning—and rushed away into that wilderness of machinery and noise, to lose amongst them his sense of shame and grief.

Horn had wanted to say some words of comfort to him, but found none to say, and felt that for such a wound time and silence were the only available remedies. Such sorrows feed on themselves, and must be left to wear themselves out.

In the yard he met Vysocki, just leaving the infirmary.

"Will you be at the Travinskis' to-morrow, Doctor?"

"I could not fail to be there. Theirs is the sole place in Lodz where something else besides gossip is talked."

"Yes, and theirs is the only *salon* to which not only millionaires go, but men."

But it was high time for them to part, Shaya's carriage having already pulled up outside the office.

Shaya was still within, playing with his grandchildren. Their father, Stanislas, busy writing, could only from time to time raise his head to smile at the little girls, whose auburn heads and rosy faces lay lovingly on his father's broad bosom. Shaya was an excellent playmate. He tossed them up and kissed them and laughed with them like a child; and those red-rimmed falcon's eyes were beaming with love and merriment.

"See, Doctor, what a torment it is to be a grandfather!" he said gaily to Vysocki.

"Very fine children."

"They are, aren't they? I always say so."

"They resemble Miss Rose, I think."

"Only their hair is like. For all the rest they are prettier by far."

"Well, we must be off; the train is due in eight minutes."

The nursery-governess, who was standing by the window at a respectful distance, took the little ones with her, and they all drove off.

Shaya's American horses were swift as the wind, yet they only arrived just in time, for the train was steaming into the station, chock-full of passengers.

Everybody made room for Shaya. Hats and caps flew off, a hush came over the crowd, and all eyes were turned with curiosity towards his tall imposing figure, attired in a long, grey coat. He stroked his beard, nodded to his acquaintances here and there, and walked on between two lines of by-standers who formed on either side of him, with the air of a king graciously pleased to look upon the crowd of poor people who so obsequiously let him pass.

Vysocki saw the faces of Rose and Mela looking out of the window of a first-class carriage, and darted forwards to meet them. Rose got down first, pulling after her a grey little monkey on a chain; it jumped about clumsily, and wanted every now and then to sit down on the platform.

"How are you, Rose? how are you?" her father cried. Rose kissed him; he pinched her under the chin, patting her cheek with the other hand, and said affectionately: "You are looking splendidly. I am so glad you are back again."

"Coco, come here; Coco!" she cried to her monkey, frightened by the crowd and the din; it pulled and jerked about wildly, till she had to take it up in her arms.

"Have you been wishing for our return?" Mela whispered to Vysocki, as they walked slowly to the carriage through the crowds at the entrance.

"For *your* return, Miss Grünspan"—he durst not say "Miss Mela" as yet—"I have been wishing for it during two long months," he added, overcome by the feeling that he at last saw her again.

"For two long, long months I too have been wanting to come back."

They were walking along side by side, and in the crush their hands met. But they said no more, for now they were close to the carriage.

Vysocki wanted to take his leave and get away; for the sight of Mela thrilled him with a strange delirious emotion that overpowered him. He felt so wonderfully happy to gaze at her, his eyes dim with joy and his heart throbbing so passionately that he was afraid lest he should betray what was within him. But they would not let him go.

He had to take a seat in front, opposite Mela. He saw wisps of her hair escaping from under her broad-brimmed straw hat, and her face, slightly sunburnt, of the hue of light-brown wine; and he looked at her so intently and ardently that she averted her face in confusion—a confusion, however, that she enjoyed so much that she burst into peals of merry laughter—at the antics of the monkey, which clung hard to Rose's shoulder and refused to go anywhere else. But occasionally she would snatch a swift glance at Vyoscki and then glance as swiftly away, flooded with a sensation of tremulous joy.

Rose alternately embraced the two little ones and fondled her monkey and told them of adventures they had met with on the way, so that she took no note at all of Mela's telltale beaming face.

"Aunt is not here! We have lost her!" she suddenly cried out, and stopped the carriage. She only then remarked the absence of Mela's aunt, who had been their chaperon during the journey.

"Back! We must return to the station!" Shaya commanded.

"Then, Miss Grünspan, I shall get down and look for your aunt," Vyoscki said, eagerly snatching the opportunity to escape, and jumping off as he spoke.

"That's very well; but you will have to bring Aunt with you and so come back to us."

"I shall call on Sunday. Both of you surely need rest, and

I should be in the way," he added, with an appealing look at Mela.

"Well then—if you will have it so. But on Sunday we shall be expecting you in our 'Black Room,' at the usual time. And tell Bernard—and come along with him."

"He has gone to Paris."

"He does not matter much; of late he has been less entertaining than usual."

"When shall you say the same of me?"

"As to you, Mela shall decide."

"So much the worse for me!"

Their answer was lost to him. The horses had gone off full speed already; but he had caught a look in Mela's eyes which strongly contradicted what he had said, and made his heart beat with intense agitation.

He found Mela's aunt waiting, amongst piles of suit-cases and trunks, for the porters to take charge of the heavy luggage. He gave her what help he could, and went so far as absent-mindedly to kiss her hand on putting her into a cab. After which he lingered for some time on the steps outside the station, quite absorbed in the new world of feeling which opened before him now. His imagination was full of the radiance of Mela's beauty, and fired by the memory of the warm pressure of her hand, and by her glances, instinct with keen intellectual comprehension.

After a time, finding himself unable to realize in distinct thought the meaning of all his multifarious sensations, and urged away by a subconscious craving after solitude, he went outside the town to wander along a street which had only just been marked out for building. Its track, as laid out, ran across fields of rye, amongst which only a few houses and factories were conspicuous.

"I love her; yes, I do love her!" he said to himself as he came to a standstill, his eyes fixed on a line of windmills that crowned a stretch of rising ground, with vanes slowly lifted up, like wearied arms, then dropping down again heavily, on a background of bright sky.

He turned off into a field of oats, whose darkly shining

billows came rolling up to a barrier of tawny-coloured rye that, bowing low before them, scattered to the breeze the rust-coloured pollen of its bread-scented flowers. Beyond the field of rye lay wide expanses of greensward, with grey little houses, their windows twinkling in the sun. Larks soared up from the ground just before his feet, and their songs rang out sonorously in the cloudless sky.

He gazed up at their flickering wings until they disappeared in the blue space. And then he went on his way, overflowing with an immense gladness of life, of breath, of movement, and with his breast full of the same undying potency as radiated from out the young grass, as shone in the azure eyes of the corn-flowers, as streamed forth from the wild depths of the rye, and was heard in the rippling, rustling corn, in the trills of the grasshoppers, in the caressing whispers of the breezes.

He had so intense a realization of this that his eyes grew moist with tears of infinite tenderness. He plucked blades of corn by handfuls to cool his burning lips; and so went walking on, not knowing whither, till he came to a low-roofed hut that blocked the way. It was half ruined; and in front of it, under the shadow of a great birch-tree, a man lay upon a scanty couch of straw. His head was resting on a low pillow, covered with check cotton print; his eyes were upon the delicate tracery of the boughs which hung overhead like cascades of verdure; and he was chanting in a thin weak voice, almost like the humming of many gnats:

"Sing, my lips, her praises sing.—Sing that Holy Maiden
Whom the Lord eternally—Hath with blessings laden!"*

*This is the beginning of the Office of the Immaculate Conception, which, translated from Latin into Polish, is extremely popular amongst the peasants; almost everywhere the whole office is sung before high mass on Sundays, to a strange weird chant that is like none I ever heard. I subjoin the Latin original of the two lines given:

Eia, mea labia—nunc annuntiate
Laudes et præconia—Virginis beatæ.
—Translator's Note.

Vysocki stood rooted to the spot. The man's voice was as the bubbling of water running over pebbles; often it would break off, but then once more rose stronger, and sank again, till it ended in a long, low sigh and a gurgling sound like a death-rattle. He then would run the beads of an enormous rosary through his fingers, and kiss the metal crucifix at the end of it, and eye the wall of standing rye that bent forward to him with rustling ears and stalks, and, quivering there for an instant, drew back again; while in front of the hut the tall stalks of mullein also bowed towards him, looking with pale-yellow eyes upon that expanse of fallow-coloured waves, over which there floated a haze of pollen.

"What ails you?" Vysocki asked in country dialect, sitting down beside him.

"Nothing, sir, nothing ails me; only I am dying—dying piecemeal," the sick man answered, speaking slowly, with no apparent surprise at the other's appearance, and looking up to him with sad grey eyes like the clouded sky that just then overcanopied them.

"But what is your illness?" the doctor asked, moved by the man's resignation.

"It is death, sir; it is—this"—drawing aside the rags that covered him; and Vysocki saw that both legs had been cut off well above the knees, and enveloped in dirty bandages.

"The factory bit off both my feet up to the ankles; then the doctors cut my legs off as far as the knees. But death came on all the same; and they cut them off further and further up; but death came on still and is still coming on. Yes, it is coming, and will be with me soon, as I pray Our Merciful Lord and His Most Holy Mother." And he kissed the crucifix at the end of his rosary.

"And do you feel no more pain?"

"None, sir, none; and what pain could I feel? My legs are gone, my flesh is no more, my arms are wasted away. See!" And he showed him two bones just covered with skin the colour of ashes, and ending in hands so terribly emaciated

that they resembled the boughs of a dry plum-tree that stood by the hut.

"There's yet a little breath left within me; but when it passes out—which may the Lord Jesus grant soon!—then shall a man have such rest as befits a Christian."

His utterance was feeble and slow, with frequent pauses; and over his thin face, as grey as the earth he was lying on, there came a smile, like the last gleam of a day that is ending.

"Who is there to attend on you? Who sees to your wants?"

"The Lord Jesus is there to attend on me; my wife sees to my wants. All day long she is away at work in the factory; in the evening she comes and takes me into the hut, and cooks food for me."

"Have you any children?"

"We had." His voice sank lower, and his eyes grew moist. "Four of them. Ay, four. A machine tore Antek's head from his body. Marysia, Yagna, and Voytek died of the ague—all of them!"

He was silent for a while, gazing with glassy eyes beyond the rippling corn that surrounded his hut. Over his ashen-grey features, stamped with the stony apathy of the peasant, there flashed an expression of agony as though a nail had been driven into his heart.

"Oh, that dunghill!" he groaned aloud, shaking his fist at the town, whose roofs and chimneys were seen afar, looming above the cornfields.

"Let me see your legs," Vysocki said, and instantly proceeded to unwind the rags that bound them, in spite of the terrified peasant's strong protests. Seeing they were of no use, he desisted, only staring wildly at the doctor.

Gangrene had set in beyond all hope, but the man's organism was so utterly exhausted that it only advanced by very slow degrees. Vysocki's heart was wrung with compassion. He brought water from a little well, washed the wounds, and treated them with a solution of carbolic acid that he always carried with him, but could not replace the same bandages;

they were too filthy to be used, soaked as they were with purulent matter and dried blood.

"Have you no rags that are clean?"

Too deeply moved to speak, he shook his head.

Then Vysocki, on the spur of the moment, took off his own shirt, tore it into strips, and bandaged the sufferer's legs with them. The peasant said no word, but his bosom and all his body moved and heaved convulsively, and a violent fit of choking sobs clutched him by the throat.

All was done. Vysocki dressed himself in a hurry, pulled up the collar of his dust-coat, and bent over the poor man, saying: "Farewell for the present; to-morrow I shall see you again."

"O Jesus, my beloved, O Jesus!" the poor creature cried out, and all the gratitude of his simple peasant's soul burst forth. He crawled from his couch—all that was left of him—to fall at the doctor's feet, embracing them and pressing them to his breast.

"O good kind sir! Holy one! Angel of God!" he sobbed, intensely thankful for the comfort afforded him; and his tears flowed down in streams.

Vysocki put him back on his couch, forbade him to move, wiped away his tears, smoothed down his hair, dishevelled and bathed in sweat, and fled hurriedly, as if ashamed of what he had done.

The other watched him disappear amidst the corn, looked all round him, crossed himself in amazement at what had come to pass, and for a long while gazed in dull stupefaction at the billowy rye, at the birch-boughs tossing overhead, at the bands of sparrows flying to and fro, and at the sun, which now hung low above the fields. Then he raised his head a little, and began to sing, in a voice choked with tears:

> "Sing, my lips, her praises sing—Sing that Holy Maiden
> Whom the Lord eternally—Hath with blessings laden!

"I will moan now no longer. Thou hast had mercy upon

me, O Jesus! Now death is coming—is coming—" he repeated feebly, more feebly still, seeing as through a mist the waves of corn, rustling as they made obeisance before him, and the greyish azure of heaven, that seemed descending to wrap him round—and that kind good dear sun, that with its last fading beams was sending him a kiss.

CHAPTER VII

BOROVIECKI, Horn, and Max Baum went together to Mrs. Travinska's; she had arranged a great party to be given on her name-day. Nina came to meet them at the door, clad in a dress of thin white silk, which set off her delicate transparent complexion very well, reminding one of the faint pink petals of a camellia. Her eyes, greenish, with gold specks, gleamed as brightly as the diamonds in the rosy lobes of her ears; and her luxuriant chestnut hair, dressed *à la Grecque*, formed, as it were, a crown of gold, set on a lovely head that resembled a cameo subtly carved in pale Sicilian coral.

"I have a very pleasing surprise for you," she said to Charles.

"All the more a surprise, since you say it is pleasing, madam," Charles answered with a touch of irony, endeavouring to look over her shoulder and into the *salon*.

"You may guess, but please do not look," she said, placing herself between him and the door.

But at that very moment Anne's smiling face peeped out from behind the cherry-coloured hangings, and she came in to meet them.

"Well, as I have failed to surprise you, I may leave you both together, and only take these gentlemen with me," said Mrs. Travinska, turning to Max and Horn, with whom she left the room.

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning; and I came over here with Mrs. Vysocka."

"Well, what news from home? And how is Father?" he inquired, but not with much show of interest.

Then, taking her by the hand, he went with her to the

window. "You see those walls yonder? They are the walls of my factory—of yours," he said, pointing beyond the glass roofs of Travinski's spinning-mill, to where some brickwork rose amidst high scaffoldings.

"I have seen them already. As soon as I came, Nina took me to the end of the yard, and showed me your factory through the railings. She told me, too, how very, very much you are working all day long. But really you must not overwork yourself; you must not!"

"I am sorry to say, on the contrary, I must. To-day, for instance, we have been busy ever since dawn. Had to pay the workmen."

"Father sends you two thousand roubles by me."

"Where can he have got the money from?" Charles asked, as he pocketed the notes.

"It was a secret hoard. When you wrote him about the trouble you were in, and how you were forced to borrow, he put it in my hands and told me to bring it here to you. I came here for no other purpose, I assure you," she added, considerably confused, and changing colour; for she had got the money by pawning all her jewellery, and other means—sales of which his father alone knew; but she was sure he never would tell.

"Anne, I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. The money could not have come in at a better moment."

"I am so glad—so very glad of it!" she said, greatly delighted.

"And how very kind of you to have brought it yourself!"

"You see, it would have taken more time to send it by post," she replied, pleased to be speaking the literal truth. "And I could not bear the thought of your working so hard and being in such difficulties, when I could manage everything so easily."

"Easily! You may think it an easy thing, but nobody else would have done so."

"Because no one else loves you as Father does—and as I

do!" she added, boldly, with such a look of love, so sincere and simple, gleaming from beneath her jet-black brows, that he too, in a mood of sincere affection, seized her hand, kissed it passionately, and tried to take her in his arms.

"No, Charles, you must not—somebody might come in," she exclaimed, extricating herself from his embrace, turning away her flushed face, and firmly closing her lips, which trembled with excitement.

When they entered the *salon,* already filled with people and with talk, Nina smiled pleasantly at Anne, seeing such radiance of joy on her pretty face and in her bluish-grey eyes.

That day Anne was really charming; the knowledge that she had been able to assist her beloved, and that her "darling boy" had shown himself so kind and so affectionate to her, made her eyes sparkle with delight, and everybody was struck with her good looks.

She could not remain seated, she longed to get out into the garden or some solitary field to sing aloud for sheer happiness; and following her impulse, she went out of the house. But the yard was paved with stones, and had red brick buildings all round, and an ocean of houses beyond. So she returned to the *salon,* and finding Nina, walked about with her, arm in arm, in close friendship.

"What a baby you are—Anne, what a baby!"

"Because I feel so happy to-day," she answered impetuously, her eyes fixed on Charles, conversing with Mada Müller and Mela Grünspan, by whose side Vysocki was sitting.

"Hush, little one; they may overhear you. You should not trumpet your love so loud as that."

"But I neither can nor care to conceal it. Is love a thing to be ashamed of?"

"Ashamed of? No.—But we should keep it well hidden in our hearts, out of sight of the herd."

"But why?"

"That it should never be marred by the glance of a jealous, or a malicious, or an apathetic eye. I do not show a stranger

even my bronzes or my best pictures. I fear lest they may not feel all their beauty, lest their gaze soil them and take something from their loveliness. And far less would I suffer them to look into my soul."

"But again, why?" said Anne, who could not realize the sensitive-plant delicacy of Nina's soul.

"Because there are many whom I do not count as men; yes, even some among to-day's guests here—manufacturers, capitalists, specialists in various industrial lines: men whose aim, and whose only aim in life is to do business and make money. For them the ideas of love, of a soul, of the good, of the beautiful, and so on—are drugs in the market, or like unsigned notes of hand."

Here Nina broke off to meet Mrs. Endelman, who was entering the *salon* with so imposing a mien that she attracted general attention. A few paces behind her walked a couple of handsome young girls, both dressed alike, who formed her retinue.

One held her lady's handkerchief, the other her fan. They both made a sweeping bow to the company with the stiffness of automata, and were exclusively attentive to every gesture of their lady, who did not even deign to introduce them to her hostess. She simply dropped into an easy-chair, and, having first put up a lorgnette with a long tortoise-shell handle, commenced in loud shrill tones to express her admiration of Nina's beauty, of the numbers of her guests, and of her drawing-room, beckoning at intervals, with the gesture of a monarch, to one or the other of the girls who formed her suite—her maids-of-honour—for fan or pocket-handkerchief.

"She does look like a queen. Like Mary—Mary Magdalen," said Grosglik.

"You mean Maria Theresa, no doubt," Kurovski whispered.

"It's all the same.—Ah, Endelman, how are you getting on? How much does this mummery amount to?" the banker queried. Endelman had slipped in quietly after his wife, and was now modestly exchanging greetings with his fellow guests.

"I am well, Grosglik. What?" he said, putting his hand up like an ear-trumpet.

"Mr. Boroviecki, do you know when Moritz Welt is to be back here again?" said Grosglik.

"He has not said a word about that to me. Nor written either."

"I am rather uneasy; something may have happened to him."

"Oh, he'll not kick the bucket," Charles replied flippantly.

"Well, but I sent him an order for thirty thousand marks. Now a week has gone by, and he's not back yet. What am I to think? There are so many rascals about——"

"What are you driving at?" Charles asked, impressed by his manner.

"At the possibility of his having been robbed or murdered. 'A rouble is harder to come by than a mishap any day,'" he remarked sententiously in conclusion, with a heavy sigh; for he was really disquited and upset concerning his thirty thousand, and knew Welt too well to put suspicions lightly aside.

"Mary, since Mrs. Travinska begs you, don't hold back. You can play beautifully; do so!" was Grosglik's advice to his daughter, whom Mrs. Travinska had asked to play.

Mary, a very thin girl with salient hip-bones and an inordinately tiny mouth, sat down to the piano, and listlessly struck the keys; her sallow, pimply complexion, red nose, and lean, long arms somehow made one think of a plucked frozen goose, wrapped up in white silk.

She played some sonata or other, uncommonly long and tedious, with the effect of shortly setting everyone talking, her father, Grosglik, the loudest. He had been told by Endelman how Bernard had turned Protestant, and was indignant at the news.

"I said the fellow would end badly! He wanted to pose as a philosopher, as a decadent, and he turns out to be simply a sneak. And why go in for Protestantism? I thought he had more gumption in him. It's all the same to me, his having gone over to another religion; a Jew, whether he

turns Catholic, or Protestant, or Mohammedan, always and in every case remains a Jew."

"Don't you approve of Protestantism?" said Kurovski, whose hazel eyes were following Anne, walking with Nina about the room.

"No, I do not, and wouldn't turn Protestant on any account. I am a man who loves beautiful things, and who needs them. When I have worked hard all the week, and the sabbath has come round, I require some place to go to—a grand place, with fine paintings, artistic sculptures, a splendid ritual, and a good concert, or part of one. I admire your ceremonies exceedingly; they are æsthetic in their colouring, in the fragrance of their perfumes, the sounds of the tinkling bells, the lights, the chants. Then, if I must hear a sermon, I don't want a disagreeable one. Let me have things of the higher life spoken of in picturesque language; that is ennobling, that gives a man a comforting sensation and a taste for life. But what do I find in a Protestant church? Four bare walls, quite bare, as if the whole business were going into liquidation. And to crown all, in comes their clergyman and preaches. What do you think he talks about? Hell and other subjects quite as offensive at least. Thank you, no! I'm not going to church to have my nerves shattered. I am no callous boor, I am a highly strung man, and don't care to be harrowed by a troublesome babbler. And then besides, I want to know with whom I am going to do business. Protestantism—what sort of a firm is that? The Pope! Ah, that's a firm indeed——"

There came no reply from Kurovski. He had walked away, and gone to sit near a small group of ladies, where he was studying Nina and Anne with a strange intensity of attention. Arm in arm they threaded the suite of rooms with leisurely steps, stopping before the nosegays and lilies of the valley which stood at every window, bending over the flowers, breathing their delicate aroma, and then passing on—fair spring flowers, both of them!

Occasionally Nina would touch with her lips the cool petals of the lilies of the valley, and pass her closed lids

over their snow-white bells, let her fingers glide along the artistic curves of the limbs of the nymphs of bronze, who were seen gazing down into the flower-filled amphoræ they were holding. And then those two would walk on, deep in quiet conversation, unconscious that Mrs. Endelman with her maids-of-honour was following them and not without envy gazing at her rooms, so simply, yet so exquisitely fitted up. On seeing the large mosaic which Nina had purchased earlier in the spring hanging from the wall in a wide-bordered frame, she stood absolutely dazed.

"Oh, how very beautiful! What colours! And what an admirable polish!" she cried enraptured and blinking her eyes in the sun's glare, reflected from the glittering surface.

"She is ridiculous, that cannot be denied; but her heart is all right. She's president of quite a number of benevolent associations, and does a great deal of good to the poor."

"She does, but because she wants people to think well of her," Max Baum said, overhearing Kurovski's remark, and replying to it.

Meanwhile there was much more room in the main *salon;* large numbers of callers had come, offered their good wishes, looked round at the rooms, and gone away. Only about twenty guests remained, all belonging to Polish society, and at the head of the intelligentsia of the town. These, as the men with the money-bags drifted away, came forward and took the places left vacant in the drawing-room.

Only a few who were not Poles stayed; that is, only the Müllers, on good terms with the Travinskis, and Mela Grünspan, with her aunt, who had several times, but to no purpose, called out to her: "Mela! don't you want to go home yet?"

Max Baum had already done so, but Mela felt unable, though she had wished to for some time—certain bitter words from Mrs. Vysocka's lips having lashed her like a whip. With nerves unstrung, she was still sitting in the same place, talking to Mada, laughing at times or telling about her trip to Italy, all the while but half conscious of what she was saying. She felt a strangely feverish and painful

desire to abandon all her previously cherished hopes and dreams.

Vysocki had spoken several times to her; she had seen the love beaming in his eyes, heard his voice, soft and low, saying to her things which the day before she would have welcomed with ecstasy; they only gave her a deep sense of pain and sorrow to-day. For it was to-day, and in Nina's splendid *salon,* that she had first become aware, with the profound intuition of love, that she never could, nay, that she ought not to, marry Vysocki.

At that instant of clear vision, terribly conscious of the barrier which separated them, she was overcome with apprehension. She stared vacantly at those around her, seeking Vyoscki's smiling face and bright eyes, hoping to find in them something that might drive away those thoughts which assailed her in burning, hateful swarms; but he was too strongly enamoured, too joyful of humour; and in too congenial company besides, to guess at her present disposition of mind.

He was just then, together with Travinski, Kurovski, and some other young men, eagerly expounding his altruistic views about society and its needs, mechanically brushing his coat-lapels, twirling his moustache, pulling down his shirt-cuffs, and rejoicing to have found intelligent listeners and left for a while the dull topics of everyday factory life; and he soared delightedly into the regions of arguments and conjectures.

"Why is this so?" Mela thought, with a dull pang, and could not make clear to her own mind why such horrible thoughts had come down on her, flooding her heart with bitterness unspeakable. One thing, however, was clear to her: the world of him she loved, of Kurovski, Travinski, and Boroviecki, the world of those things they were now discussing and of the ideas in which they took such warm interest—the whole world, in short, of the Polish intellectual life which she loved so much—was quite different from and foreign to her own world. "Our people—*my* people!—have

nothing in common with them," she said to herself, as she watched the clear-cut intellectual features of Travinski, who was protesting against Vysocki's views so vehemently that he had turned quite pale, and the delicate network of his blue veins stood out on an ivory background. And then, as she turned her eyes on Mrs. Vysocka and Nina and Anne, sitting together, a group of well-bred women of exquisite charm, speaking in subdued tones—there came to her mind's eye the home she lived in—her father—her sisters—her brother-in-law—and she now at last realized perforce all the offensiveness of tone, all the meanness of life, of her own circle.

Now at last did she see that she would—and for ever—know herself a stranger and an intruder from another sphere, scarcely to be borne with, and if at all, simply on account of the fortune she would bring to her husband.

"Never; never!" she said proudly, and was about to rise and leave the house.

Her aunt had once more crept up to her, asking, in a husky singsong drawl: "Mela, don't you want to come home now?"

Making a great appeal to her will-power, she went so far as to rise from her chair—to go—away—out of the world she was in—never, nevermore to return! Though she loved him with all her soul, she felt she must renounce him, never to see him again.

"Never, never!" she repeated between her set teeth. She remembered but too well the lot of those amongst her own people whom she had known who had married Poles; their humiliations, even before their own children, who reproached their mothers for the Jewish blood in their veins; and the barrier of scornful amenity or of slighting depreciation always making them strangers to their nearest and dearest.

"Are you going then? Why so soon?" Vysocki cried, standing in her way.

"I do not feel well, I am still fatigued after my journey,"

she answered, not looking at him, and fighting down with all her might the sobs that shook her bosom, and the desire to stay that welled up within her at his words.

"I hoped you would stay till evening; that we should afterwards go to see Rose and that you would give up these hours to me. Why, for two whole months we have seen nothing at all of each other!" he said in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"I remember, I remember!—Two months!" she returned; and suddenly her heart was filled with such a glowing intensity both of love and of pain that her eyes glistened with tears, and her bosom heaved violently.

"And now," he added, "we shall be more at ease; only our own people are here."

"Then I certainly ought to go; I should be too much in the way," she rejoined in hard whisper.

"Mela!" he exclaimed reproachfully, but in such a soft and tender voice that her strength gave way; all her resolves, just taken, melted into thin air; she felt her heart swelling with unbounded happiness, and a quiet sense of immense love.

"You will remain, won't you?" he continued to implore her; and seeing that she did not answer, but looked helplessly in the direction of Mrs. Vysocka, whose piercing eyes she felt were upon her, he addressed the same petition to Nina.

"Madam, can you not get Miss Melanie to stay longer with us?"

Nina had learned all about the affair from Mrs. Vysocka, and had felt rather unfavourably disposed towards Mela. But when she saw how sad she looked, she felt much compassion for her; her heart beat with strong sympathy, and she entreated her to stay.

After some opposition Mela consented, though there was still a strong conflict between her heart and her mind. "It is for the last time!" she reminded herself; but, seized in the grasp of love, enchanted by Vysocki's utterances (he never for a moment left her, nor cared what his mother might think)—and far from insensible to the friendliness of Nina

and of Anne, who seated her between them and behaved with the utmost cordiality—she quite forgot that this time was the last, and imagined it was to be the first, and should continue for ever and ever.

This reception into the circle of the elect took a good deal of time, for as soon as twilight came, dinner was served in the great *salon* with oaken wainscots; these (there being no other ornament in the room) were adorned all round with a wide space of inlaid work as border, half-way up the walls. Along this border were wreathed vine-stalks and leaves and tendrils; not without clusters of purple grapes that hung from the mouths of comic masks, carved out of gilt box-wood.

Great cordiality prevailed all through the meal, and several toasts were drunk with much applause. They were even in such good spirits that Müller, having proposed Travinski's health, would have made a speech, but that he was slightly flustered, and Mada, who sat next to Baum, was unable to prompt him; so he only stammered out a few words and sat down again to wipe his red, perspiring face upon his sleeve.

"I'd like to put him in my menagerie; he's a droll enough specimen," Kessler muttered, turning to Mela, at his side.

She did not catch his words, being attentive to what Vysocki was saying. She felt besides an invincible repugnance for that bat-like head and those yellow eyes, perpetually leering at Anne, who sat between him and Boroviecki.

Perhaps Mada Müller was of all the company the only one to feel out of humour. She paid little heed to Max, trying to entertain her. Her eyes were constantly fixed on Charles and Anne. Seeing them on such good terms with each other, she asked Max softly: "Is that young lady Mr. Boroviecki's sister—she who is sitting next to him? They are a good deal like each other."

"She's his distant cousin, but also his intended wife," Max rejoined, with a stress on the last words.

"His intended wife? I—never knew—that Mr. Boroviecki had a fiancée——"

"Why, they have been engaged for a whole year, and are very fond of each other," Max said, with some exaggeration; Mada's lack of perspicacity, and her evident adoration for Charles, set his teeth on edge.

Mada's golden eyelashes, fluttering like a bird's wings, fell, heavily shading her azure eyes; her face turned from a deep flush to an extreme pallor, and her wan lips quivered strangely. Max saw this sudden change with astonishment, but could not watch her any longer, a servant whispering in his ear that someone had come to speak with him.

It was Joe, who, as soon as Max came out to him, told him point-blank that his mother was no more.

"What? what's that?" Max cried again and again, not believing his own ears; he turned round and round, took some random steps to and fro; once more, staring at Joe, heard him, all in tears, terrified and trembling, repeat the evil news —and instantly rushed out of the house.

CHAPTER VIII

NO one in the dining-room, with the exception of Nina, had remarked Max's exit.

"What has come over Mr. Baum?" Mada inquired.

"Am I my partner's keeper, unless he has got hold of my money?" Boroviecki returned flippantly. He was glad that the said partner's eyes no longer watched Anne, or his own conversation with Mada, who was much pained at the news of Charles's betrothal, and tried to induce her father to come away.

But old Müller was in a jovial humour that evening; he put his arm round Boroviecki, and called out with vulgar jocularity: "You silly Mada, here's a young man for you; don't be in such a hurry to run off!"

And so he left them both sitting together, and not a little embarrassed. Mada's head sank forwards on her breast, while she put her gloves on with elaborate care, listening all the time to the sound of his voice, which had always enchanted her, but now seemed as sad and melancholy as its reverberations in her own heart—so sad that she was afraid she should break down and cry.

"You are out of sorts this evening; what's the cause?" Charles asked in an undertone.

Mada made no answer, but, concealing under her handkerchief the agitation on her face and her efforts to keep her tears back, she raised her eyes to his and gazed long into them, till he impatiently repeated his question.

"Oh, your fiancée is seeking you," she said, with a glance towards Anne, then looking round the room.

Charles, in no very good temper, made his way to her.

"Mr. Charles, Mrs. Vysocka wants to go now; will you accompany us?"

He then very ceremoniously took leave of Mada, whose eyes followed him out through the suite of rooms.

"Then, Miss Mela, we too shall go," Vysocki said, and at once set out to find her aunt, dozing in one of the empty rooms.

"We are leaving; will you come with us?" Mrs. Vysocka said to him.

"I am afraid not. I must see Miss Grünspan home."

"Miss Grünspan! Can no one else accompany her?"

"No one," he replied in decided tones.

Their eyes met in conflict. Hers sparkled resentfully; his gleamed with calm determination.

"Will you be home soon? Anne is with us, and Boroviecki too; shall supper wait for you?"

"I could not possibly arrive in time; I have to see the Mendelsohns later."

"Well, please yourself, please yourself." She forced the words out with difficulty, suppressing all she felt.

He did not guess at her state, and went to help Mela put her things on. They started at once, for her carriage was waiting.

"Shall we drive to Rose now?"

"Yes, yes, wherever you choose," he rejoined warmly, "even to the end of the world!"

"Words fly farther than wishes, wishes than possibilities," she murmured, feeling the peace of a happy and uninterrupted evening steal over her, recalling her to reality and the resolution she had so recently taken.

"No. I do not withdraw my words. Take me, and lead me to the very confines of possibility!"

His hand trembled as it slipped into hers.

"Well, for the present I take you no farther than to Rose," she said, returning the pressure of his hand, and keeping it in hers.

"And afterwards?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

Hers were fixed on the fast-trotting horses, as she replied: "I shall let you know to-morrow."

Her aunt was taking a nap and nodding in the front seat. In silence they sat together, each glad to face the wind that blew; the carriage rolled to and fro violently, and the india-rubber tires rebounded like balls from the ruts and holes in the pavement.

They both knew that the crisis, the decisive moment, was at hand; that in a second the one word, so long hid within their hearts, yet always expected, would find utterance at last. Each was looking at the other with a clear, steadfast gaze that penetrated to the innermost depths of their souls; and every instant of that gaze brought them nearer and into closer union.

Mela had not forgotten her resolve; she still realized all its inevitability, and with all the bitterness of regret. Notwithstanding, she gave herself up with delight to the torrent of feeling that carried them both away, heart and brain, with a sense of resistless joy. With tremulous expectation she awaited his avowal; she knew he was about to declare all the love that surged up in his heart. She had now an irresistible craving to drink the cup of happiness to its last—its very last drop. She was fain to follow the lead of her frenzy, not caring what must happen on the morrow, or, rather, because she was aware what that morrow would bring. The phantom of the future was haunting her, setting before her mind the harsh reality which was in store; but she waved it from her, determined to forget all for the short space of that one evening.

She held his hand still, now and then pressing it to her palpitating breast, or passing it over her hot brow and nestling close to his side with a far-away, radiant look.

Bending forward, so near to her that his lips almost brushed her face, he whispered: "Mela!"

That one word, that one thrilling sound, penetrated her like a burning blade. Her eyes closed, her heart throbbed impetuously within her, like the wild flapping of a frantic

bird; and so mightily did this flood of gladness rush over her that she could not speak—only smile faintly, just with the corners of her mouth.

"Mela! Mela!" he said again in yet softer tones and a voice that had greatly changed, stretching out his hands from beneath his mantle, clasping her, gathering her to him in a strong embrace.

This embrace she took so passively that their bosoms met and touched. But the next instant she brusquely disengaged herself, and, pressing back with all her strength against the carriage cushions, whispered in a scarce audible voice: "Hush, be still!" Her face was deadly pale; she could hardly breathe.

"Mela, do you want to go straight home?" her aunt asked her, waking up suddenly; but she had to repeat the question several times before her niece understood.

"No, Aunt, but you may go on home. We shall stop at the Mendelsohns' and visit Rose."

They got out at the Mendelsohns' palace, where Rose came out to meet them in the hall, regarding them with curiosity, but receiving with a very cynical expression the kisses showered on her by Mela.

"Are you alone?" Vysocki inquired, trying vainly to unclasp his mantle with trembling hands, and attempting to hang up his hat where there was no hat-rack.

"Not at all; Coco is with me," she said, and, with the usual swing of her broad hips, led the way to the Black Room.

"Why, where does this singing come from?" Vysocki said. From Shaya's quarters upstairs there came a monotonous melody that floated downstairs.

"Oh, that's in Father's room. He has people chanting like that at present daily. It makes me afraid. For several months, and ever since Bucholc's death, he has been continually at prayers; and singers come here every day from the synagogue to chant something religious or other. This is quite abnormal. Besides, he has told Stanislas lately that he intended, before he died, to found a great home for the old people crippled in our factory. It's an unfavorable symptom

—very; and so Stanislas has wired to Vienna for a doctor to come over here—a specialist."

"Yes, that's very curious," Vysocki said, but he had not at all caught her meaning. He trembled with excitement, and his eyes followed Mela, who was entering a boudoir close by.

"Why are you both wool-gathering? Has your mutual love hatched out at last?"

"Almost—almost. But, Miss Mendelsohn, you will give me help, won't you?"

"Miss Mendelsohn will not!"

"Then Rose!—you so good, so kind, so beloved by us! you will help me, surely?"

"Do you then love her so very much? Tell me," she said, wiping his clammy brow with her handkerchief.

Then he set to depicting his love in so vehement an outburst that she was absolutely stupefied. She had never suspected him of such burning affection, and listened first with sympathetic interest, and at last with an indefinite sense of injury in her mind; so that, when Mela came in and sat down by them, Rose got up and went out, taking the monkey along with her.

"I heard what you said to Rose," Mela told him with a tender glance; and without giving him time to say anything more, took him in her arms, and with hot thirsty lips pressed a long, passionate, fiery kiss on his.

"Oh, how I love you!" she gasped, pausing for a moment.

Their voices then broke off, hushed and still. Holding each other close, breast to breast in a madly passionate embrace, they strained one to the other, mouth to mouth, with hearts that ceased from beating, and with unseeing eyes. And then he told her the whole history of his love in a strangled broken voice that showed all the ardour he felt.

She leant back upon the sofa, set her feet on a footstool, and in that half-reclining posture listened to his words. Even when he said he would go at once to see her father to-morrow and ask for her hand; and when at last, somewhat exhausted,

he sat down on some cushions at her feet and laid his head upon her lap, and with dim eyes looking up to her began to weave the marvellous web of their future bliss, she said not a word to interrupt him, but drank her full of that sweet intoxicating cup, her breast heaving with excess of gladness. And she gazed on him, her eyes moist with unbounded happiness, and her lips blossoming out into a strange melancholy smile. But she did not break in. Only from time to time, she drew him near her, kissed his eyes, and said: "I love you! Speak on, my darling; let me be beside myself this evening, let me be distracted!"

So he went on speaking—singing the whole sweet symphony of love, and never noticing the entrance of Rose, who had come in, sat down quietly on the sofa, put her arm round Mela's neck, and laid her auburn head of hair on her friend's bosom, whilst her ears were listening to him and her pale-green eyes feasting upon him.

And thus they continued to weave their web of love and ecstasy. The whole world was for them non-existent, and as though men, and realities, and everything, had fallen into the gulf of oblivion, hidden deep in the vague mist which was around them and in them. Words, looks, thoughts, flashed like lightning from one to the other, all trembling with the excess of their emotions, and sank with ineffable sweetness into each other's heart.

All round them the stillness was deep. No sound came in from the street; the room, dimly lit with one electric lamp, induced a pleasing drowsiness, together with its enervating perfume of crimson roses, a great cluster of which glowed in a bronze vase near a wall.

They had almost given over speaking now. But Rose, who sat motionless beside them, began to move spasmodically; she tried to fight with her sobs and keep back her tears, but could not. She flung herself down on the carpet, and burst into weeping and lamentation:

"Why does no one love me? Why, why does no one love me? Have not I, too, the right to be happy? And I too can love—and long so to be loved!" Such was the bitter cry of

her soul, and such the sore spasm of anguish that wrung her heart.

Mela could do nothing to comfort her; nor indeed was the attempt even possible. Those tears of Rose were too sharp and hard a reminder of the inexorable truth—of the terrible reality.

Vysocki had risen, wishing to take his leave; and on departing he once more reminded Mela that he was going to call on her father the next morning.

"There's one thing I must remind you of—I am a Jewess," she pointed out to him.

"That I remember. But to me it makes no difference, if you love me and are willing to embrace Christianity."

"For your sake I'd willingly embrace martyrdom itself!" she cried.—"Let's not speak of that; I shall see Father tomorrow, and write to you directly. Wait for my letter, and do not come till you get it."

She spoke on the spur of the moment, using a subterfuge. She lacked both strength and courage to tell him then and there that she never could be his wife. No. She could not have told him now; not for anything in the world.

To-morrow, ah, to-morrow!—To-day, more kisses, more caresses, still more glamour! And yet more of this love, so strong, so sweet, so intoxicating—yet once, once more!

"One instant more, my dearest! one instant only," she implored him, as they walked together through the darkened rooms and into the vestibule. "Do you not feel how hard it is for me to tear myself away from your side?"

The fear that had now taken hold of her—the fear lest she never should see him again—was so strong that she clung to him desperately and threw herself into his arms. And so they stood, lips glued to lips, joined together in a close embrace, and unable to part.

But, prolong the leave-taking how they would, the moment of departure was drawing ever nearer.

Mela, shuddering in intense agitation, crept closer and closer to his bosom, whispering sorrowfully again and again: "A little while. . . . Yet a little while!"

"But, Mela, we shall meet to-morrow! And afterwards, every day we shall meet!"

"Yes—every day—every day—" she repeated like an echo, biting her lips till the blood ran—not to burst out in a scream of despair—not to cast herself at his feet with the prayer that he might not go, but stay there, or take her away, far away, instantly!

"I love you," he said for good-night at parting, with a kiss on her hands and her mouth.

But she did not return them, nor move at all. Propped against the wall, she stood looking on blankly while he put his things on—opened the glazed door—vanished beyond it. Her strength had all gone; sobs choked her, and her heart was bursting.

"Miecio!" she called softly after him.

He did not turn back, for he had not heard her.

"All is over," Mela said to herself; her tears broke her will down and surged forth in torrents, sweeping away all that remained of her self-control.

CHAPTER IX

BORNE on the wings of happiness, Vysocki hastened to his home. They were still taking tea, and Mrs. Travinska was there as well. She had dropped in for a minute; her husband having gone out with Kurovski, it was tedious staying in the house. They were all sitting round a table lit by a big lamp, and busy giving their impressions about Nina's guests of the afternoon.

On entering, Vysocki happened to hear Anne speaking strongly in favour of Mela, against whom Mrs. Vysocka had made some unpleasant remarks. The latter, provoked by her son's presence, had raised her voice to pour forth all her racial animosity against the Jews.

Vysocki listened in silence, took tea, and thought of Mela. He was still fresh from her kisses, still felt them burning on his cheeks; his lips were parched with them, and the memories of her embraces thrilled him still. He was so rapturously happy that his mother's unjust fanatical words only made him smile with pity, looking significantly at Borowiecki, who, with elbows on table, and blowing a cloud of tobacco-smoke, was casting glances at Nina and Anne, sitting near one another, with their heads almost touching.

In the lamplight Nina's hair sparkled like gold, and her clear diaphanous complexion resembled a vase of rosy porcelain lit up from within. Her greenish eyes, stippled with russet specks, were fixed on Mrs. Vysocka's face. Anne, under her crown of dark fluffy hair, betrayed her feelings of impatience; her expression changed at every instant, as she

took up and confuted Mrs. Vysocka's allegations, at times throwing her head forward, and knitting her thick black brows, which looked like the two halves of one bent bow. Mirror-like, her mobile countenance reflected every impression that flashed through her mind, but it was with the arguments of the heart that she defended the Jewish race, and set herself against Mrs. Vysocka's logic. The latter, ensconced in an arm-chair on the farther side of the table, asserted herself in trenchant tones, now and then, when urging some specially strong point, leaning forwards into the circle of lamplight, and bringing into view her still beautiful face.

"Doctor," Anne said, "pray help me to defend the Jews, and Miss Grünspan in particular; for Charles refuses, and says she needs no defence at all."

"Well, but I too must say the very same. We might as well defend the sun for giving us too much light, too much heat."

A space of lively talk ensued, which was interrupted by the entrance of Joe Yaskulski, who was in tears, and stammered out that Max had sent for Vysocki, and he had been looking for him everywhere.

"Off at once.—Good-night to you all."

"For me, too, it's time to go," said Nina.

"It's so fine out of doors that I may see you home," Anne said. "Will you come with us, Charles?"

Charles assented, though not very much pleased with the proposal. He wanted to go to bed.

"By the by," the doctor called out from his study, where he was putting on his dust-coat, "as to Miss Grünspan, I would ask you all to have a little consideration for her. She is to be my wife!"

His mother started violently to her feet; but the doctor was already hurrying away to Baum's house.

When Max left the Travinskis to rush home at Joe's call, his mother had for some time lost consciousness. The large room was filled with the rays of sunset; a reddish glow

flooded the room, and cast a lurid light over the face of the dying woman, whose eyes stared up at the empty expanse of sky. A great Candlemas taper, clutched nervously in her hand, threw a dim yellow flicker over her tranquil features, bedewed with the sweat of her death-agony.

Frau Augusta was kneeling at the head of the bed, and saying prayers in a low plaintive voice. Her husband sat at the foot of the bed, with a cold, stony face, and stared at his wife out of eyes red with unshed tears. Not one muscle quivered, not one tear flowed from beneath his inflamed eyelids. There he sat, calm to all outward appearance, but holding to the arms of his chair with hands so firmly clenched that his nails left their mark on the hard wood. When he saw Max come in, he raised his eyes and looked, as he rushed to the bed and fell upon his knees.

"O Mother! my mother!" he cried in terror, touching the hand in which the taper of the dying was grasped.

She drew a slow, long, very long breath, and her large, glazing eyes reflected the sunset like deep waters; her right hand wandered unconsciously about the counterpane, seeking the stocking that had rolled to the wall, together with the worsted and the knitting-needles stuck into it.

In the silence of the room, the cook and all the servants were kneeling and weeping aloud.

"My mother!" Max cried once more, his grief racking his heart. He burst out crying.

She seemed to come to herself, let the taper drop from her hand, and seized his hand in her own, which was growing cold. A smile as of great joy passed over her dying lips, and she moved them. But no word came, only a stertorous breathing—the awful sound of the death-rattle. Her smile had frozen on her lips. She turned her face to the window and remained thus, looking out into the gathering twilight, and towards the last sunset clouds, which floated in the grey sky like strips of copper, and faded slowly.

The wind, blowing through the garden, bent some dwarf lilac-trees towards her window, at which their clusters of blossoms would tap, peeping in with violet eyes at the fixed

immovable visage of the dying woman, whose lower jaw was beginning to droop and fall. Though Max knew it was the end, he immediately sent for Vysocki, waiting for his arrival impatiently, and listening apprehensively to know if she still lived.

She did. But her life was now no more than a series of reflex movements. At times she would utter a low moan, or open her mouth, or aimlessly move her stiffening fingers; but she would for long intervals remain immobile, with vacant eyes gazing into the night of death, and the night now reigning over the earth.

Vysocki, shortly followed by Boroviecki, arrived at length, only to find that she had breathed her last a little before.

Max hid his face in the bed-clothes and cried like a child. Old Mr. Baum rose with difficulty, bent over his dead wife, felt her cold brows and hands, gazed for the last time into her open eyes, as if he were gazing in wonderment into the depths of Eternity—closed those eyes with trembling hands, and walked out very slowly, stopping almost at every step. It was only in his dark, empty office that he came to rest, on a pile of kerchiefs, and brooded there for a long time, without thought or movement.

When he started up from his trance, the night was far spent; the stars twinkled in space like luminous dewdrops, and the town was sleeping very quietly; only, from some house on the outskirts, there came now and then the sounds of a concertina. He rose and walked with slow steps through the whole apartment, plunged in obscurity and stillness.

Joe was in the gas-lit warehouse, sleeping on a pile of goods. Baum went on without awaking him, passing through one empty room after another, all quiet with the silence of the death that had come to the house. In the dining-room Max lay asleep on the sofa, just as he had come from the Travinskis—in a dress-coat and a white tie.

After a moment's hesitation outside his wife's room, he went in. The bed had been moved to the middle of the chamber. There she lay, all covered over with a sheet, through which the outlines of her face were just visible. Sev-

eral wax-candles burned on the table; several workwomen prayed and chanted the Office of the Dead. Frau Augusta, her face all swollen with tears, but with her two cats on her lap, was dozing on the sofa there. The draught at the open window blew the blinds out, and made the curtains wave.

Baum contemplated the scene as if he wanted to engrave it in his memory for ever, or could not take in its meaning. Then he passed round to his own room, took a lighted lamp, and went to the factory, as had been very much his wont latterly, when unable to sleep.

There stood the pavilions—a vast, silent quadrangle of stone. The moon had set; only the stars shed their dusky light, mingled with the nebulous glimmer of approaching dawn, and, as it were, enfeebled by the conflict between the night and the day, already begun in the far-off east. The yard was like a dark well, and resounded with howling and whining. They had forgotten to unchain the dogs.

But he heard nothing, as he threaded the dark tunnels of the corridors, strong-smelling with reasty air. His footsteps echoed dully in the solitude and silence, and he paced through the chambers with the measured tread of an automaton.

They were all very lonely, lonely as the grave; the two rows of looms that stretched along on either side were as skeletons that drooped inertly. There hung, like fibres and sinews torn from them, the belts and straps fallen from their pulleys, and covered with long, floating cobwebs; the pattern ribbons dangled limply down, like the hides of flayed beasts.

"Dead!" he muttered, surveying the suite of chambers and listening to the dreary silence. "Dead!" he ejaculated from time to time. But who can tell whether he was saying this of his wife, or of the factory?

Wearily he crept on from chamber to chamber, from floor to floor, from pavilion to pavilion, and his steps grew slower and feebler as he walked.

Vysocki and Boroviecki, both of them, left Baum's in a very melancholy mood.

"Sorry for Max. His mother's death—he loved her to distraction—will put him out of gear for a good long time—and just when he is all but indispensable for getting our machinery in working order. Rotten luck! But it's my luck," Charles said, grumbling.

"Is Miss Anne to come to Lodz soon?"

"In a week."

"And your wedding?"

"Just thinking about it. First of all, the machinery has to be got ready and set in motion. When our factory starts working—which cannot be before October—we shall see."

They went on in silence, but on getting to Piotrovska Street most unexpectedly came across Welt.

"Ah! When did you arrive, Moritz? We are just going to take coffee somewhere."

"I've just come back and was on my way home; but if you are taking coffee, I'm with you."

"Max's mother has just died; we come from his house."

"Died? I don't like that sort of thing." He gave a shudder. "Anything new in town?"

"Nothing to mention. Or if there is, I haven't heard of it. Too busy all day long at the factory. Grosglik will be glad to see you; he was asking after you to-day."

"He won't be so very glad," Moritz remarked, putting up his glasses with rather shaky hands, and eyeing Boroviecki sharply.

CHAPTER X

FOR two days we have been here, and yet I cannot believe that we are really in Lodz," Anne observed, as she sat on the veranda.

"We really are, all the same," old Mr. Boroviecki replied, from his little cart in the garden. He shaded his eyes from the sun, and looked round at the red brick factory walls, and on the close-packed chimneys, with a loving look at the scaffoldings round his son's factory, which were visible at the end of the garden, and he sighed gently.

"Yes, we are indeed in Lodz," she assented, and returned to the house, all littered with open packing-cases, furniture in disorder, utensils wrapped and swathed in straw, and a chaos of articles hastily unpacked and arranged by some of the workmen, with Matthew to direct them.

She helped to make order, hung up the curtains by herself, and occasionally had a lively talk with Matthew; but sat for the most part on a chest or a window-sill, looking round the lodgings with mournful eyes.

She felt much distressed; this strange house, with rooms all freshly restored, and floors smelling of the paint quite recently applied, saddened her to such an extent that she spent very much of her time on the large veranda that went nearly half-way round the house, and had festoons of wild vine about it. But even this brought her little relief, used as she was to the vast green country-side, to the bluish forests up the very verge of the sky-line, and to the glad sight of the great azure vault above, which nothing hindered her from seeing. And now her eyes encountered buildings and factories and roofs glistening in the sun—and the whole, in short, of that Lodz which enclosed her round about with

a circle of stone: the Lodz she had dreamed of, that was to satisfy every one of her desires, but that now inspired her with profound, yet indefinite and groundless misgivings and terrors.

She went back into the house, ashamed of her own weakness, and scarce able to account for the tears of vague yearning that were now springing up in her eyes.

"Do you need anything, Father?" she would ask him now and again, putting her head out of the window.

"Nothing, Anne, nothing. Why, here we are in Lodz, and Charles is coming to dine with us in an hour!" he would answer her in a full, even boisterous voice, not wishing her to guess that he too was inwardly weeping.

And he would draw a deep breath and cough explosively. It was, of course, the air, so full of the pungent odour of slaked lime mixed with boiling asphalt, which was to make the flooring of the chambers in Charles's factory. He put his handkerchief up to his mouth and looked down the long garden walk that led to the factory, and was bordered with magnificent bushes of "Centifolium" roses, all in full red and white blossoms.

It was very fine weather, serene and warm; the garden cherry-trees waved slightly, their blackened leaves shining glossily under their coating of coal-dust and soot. Thirty or forty fruit-trees raised their heads, whose verdure was paling already, and looked—enviously as it were—towards the sun and the open country hard by.

Old Mr. Adam roused himself at last, and whistled to the blackbird he had brought from the country. But it did not answer his well-known call; brooding half-asleep, with drooping wings on the sand of its cage, it lifted up its head, looked drearily at its master, and fell once more into a drowse.

"Is Charles not coming?" Anne called from within.

"Not yet. The hooters will sound for dinner in half an hour. Come here, Anne, my dear!"

She came, seating herself upon the arm of his wheel-chair, and turned her face to him.

"What is the matter with you, Anne? What is it? Tell

me frankly, but don't give way; don't blubber. Ah, see what a brave girl she is! Ha ha! you'll soon forget that Kurov ever existed at all.—Come, come! lift up your head and march on!" he said quickly. He stroked her hair, kissed her, and set to whistling very noisily, beating time with his foot.

After a time he told Matthew to wheel him into the house, where he began to make a racket, ordering the workmen about, and singing tunes he took care that Anne should hear.

And then he had a bit of a quarrel with Kama, who had come with Mrs. Vysocka to call on them and help to put the place in order; but she only made confusion worse confounded by leashing together the old hounds brought over from Kurov, that were wandering about the premises with hanging heads, and making them run about the veranda with her.

"Miss Anne! Here's Mr. Charles and that black-avised Mr. Moritz come to dinner!" she cried out from the veranda, and went out to meet them, having a great liking for Charles. The hounds followed her, and—Kurov-fashion—commenced barking at the new-comers. "I shan't bid you welcome, for I haven't seen you this fortnight, Mr. Charles; nor you, Mr. Moritz, for a thousand years!"

"But," said Moritz, as a set-off, "I have brought you something nice from Berlin. I haven't it by me, but shall bring it to you at home."

"Oh, we in Spacerova Street all know about your promises! Stephanie does not believe in Charles's either; always saying he'll come, and not coming, for the last two weeks," Kama cried, showing them into the veranda, where dinner was served.

On that day Moritz was singularly pale, nervous, and fidgety. He did his best, notwithstanding, to be talkative and entertaining, and bantered Kama so that she lost patience and flung the contents of a glass of water into his face; for which she was so severely rebuked by Mrs. Vysocka that she begged his pardon in tears.

Dinner was soon over, coffee soon drunk, and the men

went back to the factory, when on every side the sirens were hooting their afternoon call to work. When they had left, and Mr. Adam had been wheeled out into the garden for a nap, Mrs. Vysocka, taking Anne aside, said to her with great satisfaction: "I must tell you I am not uneasy about my son any longer. He was from home—in Warsaw—for a couple of days, but came back yesterday, and told me at dinner that I need not trouble any more; that he would not marry that —that Grünspan girl—because she had refused him! You hear that, Anne? That Grünspan girl has refused a Vysocki, has refused my son! What inconceivable impudence! A milk-trader's daughter not caring to marry my son! I am glad she would not; I shall have a thanksgiving mass said; but all the same, I cannot forgive her that. My son refused! And by whom? by a common Jewish woman!—He showed me her letter. She tells him shamelessly that she loves, but cannot marry him, because her family would never hear of her changing her religion. So she bids him farewell—and really with so much feeling that, if I had not known she was a Jewess, and he she wrote to, my son, I should have wept over her fate. Here it is, Anne; read it if you like, but not a word of this to anyone."

Anne was a long time reading it, covering as it did four pages of closely written script, and so fraught with tears, with love, with sorrow, with self-denial, that before the end she was crying over it.

"Why, she is dying of grief!—If the doctor loves her, he will let nothing come between them!"

"God will reward her for what she is suffering. Fear nothing; she'll not die of love, but marry some millionaire, and console herself pretty soon."

"No matter in whose heart, suffering is always suffering," Anne returned mournfully.

Suddenly she started to her feet. The sound of a fearful crash had come to her ears. It was from the factory; and then an uproar, and the yells and shrieks of many people.

An instant later Kama came running along the path from

the factory. "O Lord Jesus!" she screamed. "All killed! O Lord! O Lord!" She was beside herself, and shook with terror and dismay.

Full of dread, Anne ran to the place, but at the wicket-gate between the garden and the factory courtyard a man had been posted, who would not let her pass, explaining that there had been no catastrophe, only some upper scaffoldings had fallen and contused several workmen; and that Mr. Borowiecki had just arrived on the spot, and ordered him not to let anyone pass.

Anne returned. But after Mrs. Vysocka's and Kama's departure, further waiting became unbearable to her. She thought she could hear the groans of the poor sufferers, and sent Matthew out to get particulars of the accident; but, unable to wait till he returned, she took her little medicine-chest with her, and made for the factory.

There she found the work going on as usual, which astonished her exceedingly. Bricklayers stood whistling on the scaffoldings of the main structure; tin-workers were unrolling great sheets of zinc upon the roofs; the yard was filled with carts and bricks and lime; and the machines were still being set up in the future spinning department.

She nowhere saw Charles, who had gone to town, as they explained, and they showed her the chamber where Max Baum was at work. He hastened out to her, with a blue blouse, a grimy face, hair matted with perspiration, pipe in mouth, and hands in pockets.

She asked what had happened.

"Oh, nothing. A bit of scaffolding has fallen; but as it was, we were going to take it down."

"Have there been no casualties?"

"Charles is all right; he went out with Moritz but now," was Max's curt answer.

"I know. But have none of the workmen been hurt?—I heard a scream——"

"Yes, I suppose somebody must have been knocked about. I heard someone cry out too."

"Where are they?" she demanded rather peremptorily,

piqued by the offhand manner of his replies, and the somewhat defiant look on his face.

"In the passage beyond the third chamber.—But what have you to do with such a scene?"

"Is the doctor there?"

"They sent for him; not at home. Meantime Yaskulski is attending them. He knows about medicine; used to bleed cattle at his farm.—No. I don't let you go in; it will only upset you, and it's no sight for your eyes. Besides, you can't help them," he added firmly, barring the way.

She felt offended, and eyed him with such an air of outraged dignity that he mechanically stood aside to let her pass, and pointed out the way to her. He went back to his interrupted work, but from time to time peeped furtively into the room where the injured men lay.

It was a wide corridor, divided from the yard by a glazed partition, and was now used as a temporary ambulance. Five workmen lay there on heaps of fresh shavings and straw. A workman was helping Yaskulski to administer first aid. The passage was filled with groans; and from the bodies of the men, lying there like logs, there oozed streams of blood on to the white floor, where—in the stifling heat from the adjoining rooms and from the glazed partition with the sun beating fiercely upon it—the blood clotted and dried at once.

Anne uttered a cry when she saw all those bleeding shapes, but without more ado set to help Yaskulski dress the men's wounds. She shuddered to behold those broken limbs, already beginning to inflame and swell; she was frightened at those livid faces, begrimed with earth and blood; their groans brought tears to her eyes, and several times she was so near fainting that she had to go out into the fresh air. But she always returned. She mastered the horror, the sickening nausea, and with infinite compassion and pity she washed and stuped their wounds, and arrested the bleeding with pads of lint as well as she could. She took everything in hand (Yaskulski being more able to lament than to work) and sent Matthew out for the first doctor he could come across. The news that the young lady herself was dressing the poor

men's wounds had spread at once through the factory, and every minute someone came to look through the partition and ran back to confirm the report.

In about half an hour Vysocki, who had the office of surgeon in the factory then building, arrived. He saw with wonderment her glowing tear-stained face, her dress and hands all soiled with blood; and the half-dead victims, who tried with benumbed hands to seize and kiss the hem of her garment. He set to work with a will, and presently ascertained that two of them had their legs broken, and one a crushed shoulder and shoulder-blade; that the fourth had a fractured skull, and the fifth—a lad of fifteen, who was all the time insensible—had received some internal injuries.

Three of them, who were more dangerously injured, were conveyed to a hospital on stretchers; the fourth was claimed by his wife, and taken home amid clamorous lamentations. There remained only the lad, whom the doctor had at length restored to consciousness, and ordered to be put on a stretcher. But he shrieked out with fear, and caught Anne by her dress.*

"O madam, don't send me to the hospital, pray don't! For God's sake don't make me go there!" he shrieked.

She tried to explain and pacify him, but it was of no use. He quaked in agony, glancing with terror at the men who stood by with the stretcher.

"Well, but then tell us where your mother is; they'll take you there, and I'll not forget you."

"Mother? I have none."

"Then at whose house are you living?"

"I don't live here."

"You must live somewhere."

"I sleep in a brick factory, and always come with the bricklayers in the morning."

"What shall we do with him?"

"He must go to the hospital," the doctor decided; but the

*A word of explanation here. Throughout Poland the common people are most strongly prejudiced against hospitals, where they believe patients are inhumanly treated.—*Translator's Note.*

decision so terrified the boy that he again clutched at Anne's dress—and became insensible.

"Mr. Yaskulski, let them take the boy to my lodgings. The spare room upstairs," Anne commanded.

"Fear nothing, you will be cared for in our own home," she told him when he came to.

He did not answer, but as they were carrying him away, he gave her a long look of wonder and veneration. When the boy was upstairs, Vysocki found out that three of his ribs had been broken, and set them.

The rest of the day passed as usual.

In the evening, during supper, at which Moritz was also present, Anne went up to see the lad, who was feverish and slightly delirious; so she remained with him a little longer, and came back so greatly agitated that her hands shook as she poured out the tea. She was just about to tell Charles about the boy, when he said in a low voice, but with a strong stress on the words:

"A queer fancy that of yours, to bring injured people into the house!"

"He fears the hospital, has no home, sleeps amongst the brick-kilns; what was I to do?"

"Not at any rate to turn our house into a hospital for vagrants."

"But—but it was in your factory he was hurt—and so——"

"He doesn't work gratis," Charles cut in angrily.

She looked at him in amazement. "Are you serious? Was I, then, to turn him into the street, or send him to the hospital and give him his death of fright? Why, the very news that he was to go there made him swoon!"

"You like to apply the glamour of sentiment to everyday life. It's all very pretty, but to no purpose."

"That depends on the degree of feeling one has for human sufferings."

"Kindly believe that I too have feelings. But you cannot force me to feel tenderly for every incapable, every lame dog, every faded flower, every crushed butterfly!"

There was in his eyes a gleam of keen malicious irony.

"The lad has three broken ribs, a broken head, and a hæmorrhage of the lungs. So he is not to be classed among faded flowers or crushed butterflies. He is in pain——"

"Then let him die off, and God take him!" he retorted sharply, stung by the high tone she was taking.

"You are without mercy," she murmured reproachfully.

"I am not; but neither do I deal in philanthropy. A pity you have not harboured the lot of them in our house!"

"It was needless; but had there been any need, I certainly should not have hesitated."

"Sorry there was none: we should have had a fine sight —our home turned into a hospital, and you into a Sister of Mercy!"

"And a still finer one besides; for you would surely have thrust them all out into the street!" she answered resentfully, and thenceforward did not speak. Only her nostrils quivered, her eyes blazed, and she bit her trembling lips to conceal her excitement.

But it was not so much indignation against him that she felt, as sorrow at his unexpected cruelty. It was difficult for her to think his heart so hard, so foreign to any feeling of humanity. That it was which pained her, and she eyed him as much with incredulity as with dread. Charles, however, avoiding her eyes, talked on with his father and with Moritz, until he rose to take leave.

As he bent over her hand to kiss it on parting, she whispered: "Are you angry with me?"

"Good-night, Anne.—Come along, Moritz.—Has Matthew gone yet?"

"As soon as it was evening, I sent him round to your lodgings." It was his father who answered; Anne, incensed at Charles's behaviour, had gone out on the veranda.

"Yes! fight and conquer out of doors—all to be tripped up at home by snivelling sentimentalism!" Charles broke out when in the street.

Moritz walked on in stolid silence.

"That's a woman's logic; she'll be in hysterics over a

dying crow to-day, and victimize all her family the next—just for the whim of the moment!" he added, after a pause, still much exasperated.

Again Moritz made no reply.

"Women love to procure the happiness of humanity to the detriment of their most binding duties."

"What a woman may be," Moritz observed, "I don't care. I only want her pretty, if a sweetheart; and rich, if a wife."

"That's tomfoolery!"

"Oho! I see by your ill temper you are out of cash."

Charles smiled a dreary smile, and did not contradict him.

Their lodgings were lighted, and Matthew had the samovar bubbling. Since Anne had arrived, Charles had left the house to live in his former apartments, though inconvenient on account of the distance.

Matthew reported that Mr. Horn had called early in the evening, and left a note for Director Boroviecki, which was on his desk. It contained the news that Grosman, Grünspan's son-in-law, had been arrested on strong suspicion of arson. Horn had sent the tidings, because he knew Moritz to have dealings with Grosman.

"I say, Moritz, here is news that concerns you," Charles said, coming into his room.

"It's of no consequence," Moritz observed, after perusing the note. "He'll not sleep a wink the less for such trouble as that. Who's to prove anything?"

"But what are the rights of the matter?"

"I happen to know that the man is innocent—white as percale just bleached."

"And just calendered," was Boroviecki's amendment, as he stepped back into his room.

The apartments were very quiet. Charles wrote and made calculations in his own room; Moritz was similarly occupied in his. Max, who since his mother's death never went out in the evenings, now came straight home after supper at his father's, and would read in bed from the Bible, or have his cousin in, who was a student of divinity, and with whom he

had theological discussions and wrangled for hours on the most abstruse matters imaginable.

"Oh, doggoned!" Charles ejaculated, throwing his pen down and striding about his room. For some days since, he had had continual money troubles, and been continually disappointed by his furnishers, who—as if of set purpose—failed to keep their engagements with him; while the workmen, too, had damaged the machinery and exposed him to great loss.

To crown all, a spring of water had welled up in such abundance, while they were digging the foundations of a warehouse, that the work had to be interrupted. That day's incident with Anne, besides, and his quarrel with her, had completely unstrung him, all the more so because he felt himself to be in the wrong, and to have an ever-increasing grudge against her. She was in his way!

"Moritz!" he called out from his room. "Sell the rest of our cotton; I can't manage otherwise, and am not going to borrow from usurers."

"You have big payments to make."

"What the deuce? haven't I shown you my accounts today?"

"Yes, I saw them, but thought you had money to pay with."

"I have hardly anything at all, and everybody is disappointing me into the bargain. Can there be a conspiracy against me? If not, what does it mean? Wherever I try to get credit, I am denied. There's something underneath all this. Who can want to ruin us? It's an affair of competition anyhow; I begin to see that. What! I have sunk forty thousand roubles in it, and cannot get the factory started? And am not able to get as much more? And this in Lodz, where a fraudulent bankrupt like Shmerling is now building an enormous factory, without a groschen to bless himself with; where every scurvy fellow makes big business, and all on credit—*I* am forced to borrow from private sources?"

"Take a partner with ready money or with plenty of credit. You'd soon find one."

"Thanks for your advice; but I have begun single-handed, and single-handed I'll stand or fall. To take a moneyed partner is to go into service; and to be dependent on another man means to go on toiling as before—in order to set up one more factory of shoddy goods. A factory I want to have; I want cash too: but I don't want to manufacture worthless stuffs."

"You are out in your reckoning. Shoddy gives the biggest profits."

"And yours is the reckoning of a petty dealer, like Zuker and Grünspan, and most manufacturers who are of your people. They want to gain cent per cent, and at once, but don't remember the adage: 'Once bit, twice shy.' Next time your customer tries someone else, and you have to wait out in the cold till you catch another fool."

"Of fools there are always plenty."

"In business you are short of them sooner than you think for. You see, as people grow wealthier, they also grow more exacting. A peasant in the country buys his wife one of Zuker's kerchiefs; that same peasant, if he settles in town here, must needs buy one from Grünspan; and his children—were they only working-people—would get their kerchiefs at Meyer's. Purchasers generally are beginning to recognize that any article is cheap, not because its price is low, but because it is good. And Bucholc and Meyer and Kessler know that very well, and only do business in stuffs of good quality."

"So they do; it's a fact. But Shaya, Grünspan, and a hundred others make their millions much faster, and there's room for two hundred more—and plenty of time to get rich in."

A pause ensued, both of them thinking.

"How much do you need?"

"I must have ten thousand by Saturday."

"Aha! You are forgetting Müller. Why, he offered you a loan of his own accord."

"No, I am not forgetting him. One word of mine would, I

know, throw his iron safe wide open to me. But I cannot say that word. Unfortunately, I cannot."

"If the factory's existence, if all my future—were at stake, I should not waver a minute," said Moritz significantly. "Yes, I should give up everything else to say that word."

"I cannot. Even if I wished, I cannot——"

"But if you were forced to——"

"Up to now I am not forced. Say no more!" And he shook himself.

"Charles, you have superstitions, and they are no good in business. You think of a great many things worth doing, but are still afraid to do them. And that may cost you dear. Superstitions are a rich man's luxuries."

"Do you imagine that a 'superstition,' as you call it, is a piece of clothing we can change at will? No, it is something deep in our blood. That's why it is so hard to fight down, why I am not yet quite sure these 'superstitions' are no good, why I sometimes think—but no matter for that."

"That's bad. With such nonsensical ideas a man may be the best of colourists, but hardly even a middling Lodz manufacturer. But you are undecided, perhaps, and would like to return to Knoll. He would certainly take you back." Moritz nervously stroked his beard as he uttered the gibe.

"Let be. One does not go back to one's childhood."

"No. But one may never get out of it."

Charles looked him steadily in the eyes without replying.

"I can get the money for you."

"What? Lend it to me?"

"No, but increase my share in the concern. It would not be worth my while to lend the money, and you also would find it more convenient. There would be no fixed date for payment; and then, according to the amount of my share, I could take an active part in the business; for why should you overwork yourself as you are doing?" He said this quietly and in a rather careless tone, examining his fingernails the while.

"What do you say to bills of exchange, drawn at six months' date?"

"I tell you, I don't care to loan my money. I prefer to have it rolling, the turnover is so much greater.—Do you accept?"

"All right. We'll talk particulars over to-morrow. Good-night."

"Good-night," Moritz said, still contemplating his finger-nails, not to betray the delight this stroke of business had given him. And when Charles had left him, he locked his door, pulled down the blind, and opened a small safe let into the wall, out of which he took a large oil-paper envelope, full of accounts and notes, and along with them a big bundle of paper roubles.

He counted the money and put it back.

"A big operation!—And if it fails?" He made a grimace of disgust at the thought and glanced towards the door. There was in his mind's ear the sound of many feet and the clatter of weapons outside.

He smiled at his forebodings and set to study the balance-sheet of Borovieckí's factory with the most careful scrutiny. He had before him all the assets and liabilities of the concern in those notes and accounts, which he had got a man working in the building bureau to copy for him.

But Charles, on his side, though apparently willing to increase Moritz's share in the society, was quite determined to manage somehow to do no such thing, and even find means to eliminate him entirely. He knew Moritz too well to trust the man entirely.

Another thing besides. Such extraordinary disinterestedness on the part of one to whom the only god was the Almighty Rouble, that was a fact that required looking into with special caution.

Of Max, with whose uprightness he was perfectly acquainted, he had no suspicion. He knew that Max required for his happiness nothing further than plenty of work and and some show of independence. Max wanted to work as a master; but to him it was a matter of indifference whether

his ten thousand roubles gave him cent per cent, or whether he got only his salary as head of the spinning and weaving department.

But Moritz! he was to be feared. Who would be the first to overreach the other in the struggle now beginning? This demanded the greatest wariness.

Moritz had spoken of Müller, an unpleasant subject for Charles. Anne was now dwelling in Lodz, and her relation to him was known. He was compelled to marry her. He remembered that well, and not too seldom, as he thought that the works now building were built in part with her money.

Yet at the bottom of his heart there lurked an expectation that somehow the wedding never would come off. And so he did not quite break with Mada, nor neglect to make occasional neighbourly calls on her, during which he paid the young lady many a pretty compliment that to her meant a good deal. He was playing a double game, and knew he was; but as yet he had no idea how it would end, or where it would lead him to. At the moment, what he wanted was to have the factory started.

The "superstitions" Moritz had spoken of, the mental conflicts he seemed to be waging within himself, were merely remnants of his former attitude of mind, survivals—the scattered stones of a morality which had long lain in ruins, phrases which summarized them and had instinctively stayed on in his memory, nothing more. These superstitions (or what they meant, at least) not only did not direct his will and decisions, but had no influence over them at all. It was not on account of these that he was prevented from openly declaring what he meant to do, and from openly doing what he secretly recognized as a necessity; it was only a sense of shame, of respect for his father, and a vague feeling of social propriety that forbade one to do evil crudely and with brutality.

He had been too well-bred to commit any scoundrelly deed, and moreover was physically incapable of many an act which Moritz could do with perfect calm and serenity. To set fire to his own factory, highly insured; to betray a trust, to ex-

ploit his workmen, was beyond him. He held all these things as low and vulgarly criminal, and looked on such deeds with the loathing of a cultured man. There were so many other ways of making money! Evil, unless unavoidable besides being lucrative, held no attraction for him; virtue appealed to him by its beauty; and if it gave more profit besides, he found it adorable.

He thought over all this, and smiled—a somewhat cynical smile; but his introspection was not without bitterness and pain. "And the end of it all—is death!" he meditated—and set to read his letters.

The only one he read through was from Lucy: a request for him to meet her the next day without fail. He put the others aside till the morning, and went into Max's room; he had scarcely spoken with him since his mother's death.

"Well, what about your father? I have not had time to see him as yet. Has Travinski met the bills?"

"He has, but that will not help."

"Why not?"

"Father is no good any more. Of our five hundred looms, only twenty are working. In three months—in six at the latest—the factory will be no more; and so will he."

"What, has there been any fresh trouble?"

"No, only the end is coming on quickly. His sons-in-law are devouring him. They have come with a legal claim to Mother's estate."

"Quite natural that they should."

"It's all the same to the old man. He told them to sell all our grounds, and only leave him his factory. He will sit all day long in the office with Joe, or visit the burial-ground, and at night he walks about the factory. Signs of melancholia coming on, these are!—Ah—though that's a trifle—I wanted to warn you. Have an eye on Moritz!"

"Why should I?" Charles asked, eagerly. "Do you know anything?"

"Not yet. But I see in his face that he's hatching some bit of rascality.—And then, too many 'playta'-makers call upon him!"

CHAPTER XI

"WHAT are you ruminating about?" Charles asked Moritz point-blank at breakfast.

"About matters of business—big matters," he answered, raising his eyes from the glass of tea he was holding in both hands without drinking, so deeply absorbed he was.

"Of money, you mean."

"Quite a pot of money. I am going to make two operations, which, if successful, will set me on my legs. But as to your money, you can have it in the evening.—Am I to get rid of your cotton?"

"Not yet; I have hit on an idea."

"Why did Max glower at me so, and go away without a word, as if I were some evil beast?"

"I can't say. Last night he told me your face revealed you were planning some dirty trick; that you were in some plot."

"What an ass! How can any dirty tricks appear on my face? I look a respectable man, just as usual, don't I, Charles?"

He scrutinized his face in the looking-glass, and his harsh features, trained to assume sudden changes, took on a good-natured expression.

"You needn't wonder; Max is terribly cut up about his father's affairs."

"I gave him good advice—to have the old man adjudged incompetent, and himself appointed administrator of the factory and estate. He wouldn't, though his sisters and their husbands agreed, for they knew it was only by that means that anything at all could be saved."

"Max says it's his father's estate, which the old man has a right to squander if he chooses."

"No, he's too clever a fellow to think so really; there must be something underneath all that."

"Perhaps not; for, take it as you like, it's no pleasant thing to have to declare one's own father insane."

"I don't say it would be pleasant. A father—yes indeed, that's hard. But then the factory, the business, are also things worth making sacrifices for. What would you do if the case were yours?"

"I should not have to consider it at all; my father is almost destitute."

Moritz laughed. The talk flagged. Then he stormed at Matthew, changed his clothes a great many times, and tried on a large number of ties.

"You are dressing up as if you meant to propose to somebody."

"There may, amongst other things, be a proposal; there may," he answered, with a sickly smile.

Ready at last, he sallied out with Charles, but was so absent-minded that he had to go back twice for something forgotten. His hand shook a good deal, too, when he settled his glasses, and, the day growing hotter, he grew more and more nervous. He was shaky all over, and his hand could not grasp his stick properly, which more than once dropped to the ground.

"You look frightened at something."

"No, but I am unhinged," he said. "I must have been overworking myself."

They went together to a flower-shop, where Charles bought a big bouquet of roses and carnations, and ordered them to be sent at once to Anne. The flowers were an offering to atone for his rude conduct of the day before.

Moritz went to his office in Piotrovska Street, but could do nothing there; he looked into the cotton storehouses, wrote an order for Rubinroth, and smoked a few cigarettes, but all the while revolving in his mind Grosglik and the business about which he meant to call on him. Now and then

he would shiver and shake like a man with an ague, and then mechanically touch the oil-paper envelope with the money inside, which was in his pocket; the touch would set him right. For a moment a jaunty, courageous look would overspread his face; and energy and a resolve to act directly welled up in him once more.

At one of such moments he walked on bravely as far as to Grosglik's, but just outside his office he drew back, paced Piotrovska Street for a while; and then, in pursuance of an idea that had occurred to him, purchased a bouquet of the finest and most expensive flowers to be got, had them tied with a ribbon of great price, wrote Mela Grünspan's address on his card, and sent off both card and bouquet.

He jotted down the price in his note-book: "Unforeseen expenses—personal," but crossed off "personal," and wrote "For the firm" instead. And then, though it was rather early in the day, he went round to dine at the Colony.

"I must think the matter over," he said in self-excuse.

In the dining-room they had cleared away the fancy-work that lay scattered about the table, and laid it for dinner. From the next room came the clatter of sewing-machines and the noise of talk.

The diners were coming in, one by one. Malinovski came first, and sat down quietly by the wall; he was looking so weary and mournful that Mrs. Stephanie went and sat down by him.

"What is the matter with you?"

"I am unwell—unwell!"

He passed his hand across his brow, sighed, and looked at her so sorrowfully out of his sea-green eyes that she could find no word to say, and left him.

Nor did he speak at all when everybody had come and taken his place, until Horn came and sat next to him. Then he whispered: "I know where she lives."

"Who?"

"Sophy. In Stoki: Kessler's palace."

"Still interested in her?"

"No, but I wanted to ascertain where she was." And he closed his mouth.

"Do you know," said Horn, addressing the company, "that Grosman, Grünspan's son-in-law, has been arrested?"

"Of course we know. That bird will have a rest now, and the fire he lit will cool his heels."

"Is Grosman that pretty Mela Grünspan's brother-in-law?" Mrs. Stephanie inquired.

"Yes; he lately had the misfortune to be burnt down. Poor man! the insurance money might have consoled him; and now they take him by the collar and haul him off to jail!"

"It's all a mistake," Moritz asserted. "Grosman will be set free this very day!"

"Mr. Horn, do come and sit down with us," Kama exclaimed, making room for him; and when he had done so, she added: "I must ask you about one thing."

"I am all attention."

"Have you a mistress?" she said quite loud.

One moment, all were dumbfounded; the next, a roar of laughter.

"What on earth are you saying, little girl?" her aunt cried, turning very red.

"Have I said anything wrong? Why, in every French novel all the young men have sweethearts!" she returned, quite unabashed.

"You parrot, you! Repeating words you don't even know the sense of!"

"Good gracious, Aunt! Why are you storming at me so? I've no notion."

With a shrug of her shoulders, she walked out into the parlour, and when Horn followed her there, "I am a parrot," she snapped at him, "but I won't say a word to you."

"But it's your aunt, not I, who calls you so. I want to know why Kama didn't welcome me when I came in; and why Kama tyrannizes over me, and is so full of caprices."

"She's not full of caprices; she tyrannizes over no one.

But you—you may go to your music-hall singers—those dreadful girls! I know all about you—all!"

"And what does Kama know?" he asked, with a serious air, to hide his amusement.

"Everything, everything!—That you are a bad man, a wicked man, a dreadful man, a rake. Mr. Fishbin told me why you never came here last Sunday. You were in Arcadia. Yes, you were there, drinking, and singing, and kissing those —those minxes! I hate you, I loathe you!"

"And I love you all the more for it, Kama!"

He tried to take her hand, but she snatched it away, and put the width of the table between them.

"Yes, yes! when you were miserable, you came to us to be comforted, and have compresses put on your head, and be cried over!"

"But when was I so miserable?" Horn asked.

"When? Why, before you got your situation at Shaya's."

"I was not miserable then—or ever. Indeed, it was then I enjoyed myself most, for I had more free time."

"What? were you not miserable?" she ejaculated, with a quick step forwards.

"Never!"

"And are you not so now?" she inquired excitedly, in a tearful, reproachful voice.

"Not even in my dreams.—Why, Kama, what has come over you?"

"And you were not miserable? And I have prayed for you! I denied myself a hat, for I was ashamed to wear finery; and I was always crying and thinking of you; I was so miserable I could not sleep; and you—you were not miserable at all! O Lord! O Lord! how wretched I am!" she cried out in a broken, thrilling, deeply resentful tone of voice; and big tears came trickling, rolling down her cheeks.

"My dear Kama! Dear child! Kama, my wonderful little darling!" he exclaimed in raptures, greatly affected and kissing her hands.

But she drew them back, covered her face with them, and

cried out between fits of sobbing: "I do not love you any more! If you had been miserable, I would have gone through anything—even death—for your sake.—But—but—you are a hateful man, a wicked man. You are not miserable—you have deceived me!" And she wept spasmodically.

Horn was at a loss what to do. He tried to explain matters; Kama would not hear him. And then, greatly touched as he was, he had a very great mind to laugh outright; she was such a great baby! So he went and sat beside her, quietly.

She started away from him, caught up her little dog from the sofa, and held it as a shield, saying: "Bite him, bite him, Picolo! He's a bad man. Has deceived Kama, and Kama loves him no more."

He went to the door, smiling; the factory sirens had begun intoning their afternoon chant.

"So you will not so much as take leave of me? Nor even beg pardon?" she called out, hurriedly wiping her tears away. "Very good, then. From this day forth, we do not know one another; from this day forth, I walk out with whomsoever I may choose. Yes, yes, I will. Don't think I care for your company. Not in the least."

"Nor do I care for yours; I have far more fun in Arcadia than with Kama."

"That's all one to me. Kiss those girls; you may."

"Farewell to Kama, and farewell for ever!" he cried in tragic tones, and made his exit.

She looked at him fiercely, and with stony indifference heard the door close on him. But on hearing the sound of his feet on the stairs, a sharp pang shot through her at the thought he really might have gone away for ever.

Looking out of the window, she saw him cross to the other side of the street and disappear presently down a lane; and then she dropped on to the sofa, clasped Picolo to her bosom, and exclaimed: "O Picolo, dear, darling Picolo, how very wretched I do feel!"

But her mood of weeping had passed away; so she looked into the glass, smoothed her dishevelled hair, and sedately went over to her aunt, took her by the hand, and with a

mysterious air led her to the parlour; where she fell upon her neck, and cried mournfully: "All is over. Never, oh, never shall we see Horn again!—Aunt, I am so unhappy!" But, observing that her aunt was the reverse of interested, she drew away from her, and asked in a tone of sorrowful reproach: "What! do you not shed even one tear?"

"Of all the nonsensical girls—" Mrs. Stephanie was beginning, when Moritz called from the antechamber, putting his head into the parlour: "Kama, I'm off; won't you kiss me good-bye?"

"No, but Picolo will!" and she went for him, the dog in her arms; but Moritz would not wait, and was gone.

Once more out in the street, he again felt his resolution to see Grosglik fail him, and he tried to think of some other more pressing business to be settled elsewhere—of a matter he was to see Kessler about—and then of going home as an alternative.

Finally, however, he got over his qualms and entered the banker's office.

"Is the Director within?" he asked of Vilchek.

"Yes, he is, and has been sending for you these last days."

"Your affair with Grünspan, is it settled yet?"

"Only just begun; we have got as far as fifteen thousand roubles."

Moritz was astonished. "Won't that do?" he asked.

"Not half enough."

"Are you not—I speak as your well-wisher—are you not pushing matters too far?"

"You yourself advised me to stand firm."

"I advised you? I advised you? Possibly I did, but there's a limit to everything," Moritz answered, not a little vexed; for when he had counselled Vilchek to squeeze Grünspan, he had no decided intentions concerning Mela, and now he was sorry to have given the counsel.

"By the by, come round to Boroviecki's office to sign the agreement about the coal-supply."

"Thank you very, very much," Vilchek said with a joyful handshake.

"But I must have a word with you first."

"As to what I must pay for your services? Tell me frankly."

"We shall arrange all that later. I have in mind bigger dealings with you. I expect to go in half an hour; you will come out along with me, and we shall have a talk."

Moritz slowly took off his overcoat, rubbed his hands, and glanced out at the street, overshadowed with a dark rain-cloud; the rain was falling outside and pattering on the window-panes.

"What is to be is to be—and all will come right," he said to himself as he entered the private office.

The banker started up at his entrance. "How are you, my dear fellow, how are you?" Grosglik cried as he embraced him. "Too bad of you to leave all your friends so uneasy about you, and for so long!—We were all in such fears on your account! Even Boroviecki wanted very much to get news of you."

Moritz smiled quietly to find him so interested.

"What about the wool?" Grosglik inquired. "Yet it was of you I was thinking chiefly."

"Many thanks; you are an extremely kind man."

"Who can say I am not? Yesterday I gave twenty-five roubles to the fresh-air fund. See, here it is in black and white." And he pushed a newspaper over to him. "Well, what about our wool?" he asked again, with some impatience.

"You know how the prices of building plots and of bricks have risen, don't you?"

"I do; we deal in building plots to some extent. Yes, a lively season is commencing in Lodz.—You have heard," he went on to ask in a lower tone, "what they are saying in town about Grosman?"

"Police doings?"

Grosglik smiled. "Tut, tut!" he said, looking round, and opening the office door to see that no eavesdropper was listening. "Yesterday they were within an ace of arresting him."

"And I heard yesterday evening, on arriving, that he had been arrested—quite."

"Oh, Lodz is a town of gossips. People must at once make everything that goes on their own business. What does it matter to anybody what other people do? Information was lodged against Grosman by someone, but nobody can possibly harm him. Why, he's as unspotted as I am myself."

Moritz smiled again, an enigmatical smile.

"Why on earth," Grosglik continued, "should the police meddle with people's private affairs?"

"Have you much at stake in the matter?"

"A cool thirty thousand! They might have been of use to him. But then, accidents do occur to factories as to goods as well—and to people. The insurance rate is high, and it's so hard to pay up good money for nothing. And when a man is unlucky—even fire won't burn for him by itself!"

"Grosman will come to no harm; he's an honest man."

"So I say. And I'd even stand his sponsor. But what's to be done? There are so many rascals about, ready to swear they saw him—I don't know what they wouldn't say.—What about my wool?"

"I bought it, and sold it cash down directly."

"That's splendid, for I am short of cash just now."

"Who, alas! is not short of money?" was Moritz's melancholy reply.

"You at least, for you've a good head on your shoulders.—Have you the money by you?"

"I have not," Moritz answered with deliberate coolness, though feeling his heart beat fast.

"Send it round to me by four o'clock without fail; there are the bills of exchange to be met.—Have we made a good haul?" he asked, offering Moritz a cigar.

"*I* have—pretty good. As to *you*——"

"Why," he interrupted hastily, "we were associates, and the capital is mine."

"Mine rather, since I am in possession of it," Moritz retorted, lighting his cigar.

Either the banker had not caught his meaning, or would not catch it, or did not believe his own ears; for he lit his

cigar from Moritz's match, saying: "We agreed on ten per cent after deducting expenses."

"That ten per cent I shall pay you annually, but I am not returning the capital," Moritz answered coldly.

"What—what are you talking about? Have you a screw loose anywhere?" he shouted.

"I'll be frank with you. I have invested the money."

"My money!"

"Your money. I have borrowed it from you at a remote date of reimbursement."

The banker sprang to his feet, and stood stupefied, doubting the evidence of his senses. "Mr. Moritz Welt, pay my thirty thousand roubles back to me this very instant!"

"Mr. Grosglik, I shall not. Needing them to carry out a big business operation, I have appropriated them. You shall have ten per cent for them yearly, and the capital itself at my own convenience." He was by now quite composed and at his ease.

"Are you mad?—No, but knocked up, wearied with your journey and with business worries; you must rest awhile.—Antony! fetch a glass of water.—Antony! fetch a syphon of soda-water.—Antony! fetch a bottle of champagne!" he called out in great excitement to the servant in attendance on the threshold, and ordering each time a different beverage. "Yes," he went on, "this hot weather reacts upon the head; I know! I myself pretty nearly got a stroke the other day. My dear Moritz, indeed you are exceedingly pale; haven't you a pain about the heart? Perhaps we had better call in a doctor."

Moritz eyed the man with an amused smile; he was so comically terrified!

"Calm yourself a little.—Now, now!—I have some eau-de-Cologne here to bathe your forehead with."

And, moistening a handkerchief, he was about to dab Moritz's temples with it, when the latter cried: "Oh, let me be. I am quite well, quite in my right mind."

"I am delighted to hear it. Dear, dear, how you frightened me! So much that I was a bit shaken too.—A good joke, ha

ha!—To play me such a trick! And I was taken in and thought you really meant it. Ah, that's a good one, that is! —Come, hand the money over now; our cashiers are expecting it.—A good joke, a first-class joke!"

"I have not got it. I have, as I told you, appropriated it."

"What's that, what? It's an outrage—it's robbery—robbery in open day!" he shouted, making as if to rush upon Moritz.

The latter only clutched his stick very hard, and eyed Grosglik steadily.

"Mr. Blumenfeld! Connect our telephone with the police station," the banker cried, opening the door to the bureau. "Oh! I shall take another tone with you now—you—you thief! You shall be chained—fettered—rot in prison—freeze in Siberia!"

"You'll just be quiet, or I'll have you up for defamation of character. And you're not going to frighten me with the police. What proof have you that the money you gave me in the cheque on Leipzig was not my own? Aha! what do you say to that?"

The banker, suddenly quieted, sat down and stared at Moritz for a good while with an inexpressible feeling of impotent wrath, so intense that it brought the tears to his eyes.

"You may go, Antony, we do not require you. He shall be cared for more properly in jail."

"Kindly refrain from throwing silly idle words about; I am beginning to have a little too much of them. Let's talk as between man and man."

"And I trusted you so! I looked on you as my own son!—As my own son? As my son and daughter both together! You! you, to have played me such a villainous trick—yes, a trick for which may the Lord God requite you! For who would do so mean a thing to his friend who trusted him to the tune of thirty thousand?"

"Don't bother about that.—I have borrowed thirty thousand roubles of you, date of payment unstated, for the purpose of making a big operation. I'll write you an acknowl-

edgment, and also pay back the capital at some future time. Meanwhile the money is in activity."

"And I know where," muttered the banker, completely crushed. "In Berlin—in cabarets—I know——"

"Now I want to have a friendly talk with you," Moritz said impatiently.

"You are a thief, and no friend of mine!" he shouted, once more giving way to his wrath. "Give me my money back!" He reached for a revolver lying in a half-open drawer of his desk, but slammed the drawer instead, put the key in his pocket, strode about the room, cursed volubly, called names, and even advanced on Moritz with clenched fists.

The other sat motionless, stick in hand, with a sardonic smile on his face, until the banker had quieted down a little. Then he set to expound to him what his plans were.

"I am thirty," he said; "high time to set about doing something. I have good ideas, but no money to carry them out with. What was I to do? As an agent, I might manage to live somehow, but never amass capital; I live so much on credit that if I were now to go into liquidation, I should be worth a few thousand roubles less than nothing. Now I shall be able to get on; and as you have furnished me with the money, I feel it my duty to tell you what I wanted it for.—Boroviecki is quite down on his luck, with no more ready money at all; he'll have to borrow of usurers. I shall let him have the money now, find an opportunity of taking his place as dominant partner—and arrange matters so well that he will be no more than manager in his own factory. My plan's a good one. He has forty thousand roubles sunk in the factory; there are means of getting them out of him—and in a year, or two at the utmost, he'll be stone-broke. I have gone well into the matter, and warrant you it must succeed." All this Moritz said quietly, confirming his assertions both with rows of figures, and with particulars of the various special dodges and trickeries, misrepresentations and frauds, with which it was his intention to put an end to Boroviecki. He spoke for a long time, unreservedly and exhaustively.

The banker listened and grew quite calm; stroked his whiskers, sniffed as if he had scented carrion that would make a good meal for him too; and his eyes sparkled, and he smiled with delight at the dastardly plot. He even forgot that his own money would be spent in carrying it out, and heartily consented to the whole scheme. Now and then he would drop a word or two to suggest some secondary project, which Moritz accepted on the spot with supplementary additions, weaving it into his plot as he went on constructing it, always with more and more of confidence and secrecy.

Grosglik drank some water, opened the window, and called out to the people who were taking away the trucks of wool from the warehouse: "Wait there in the yard!"

"It's raining; the wool might get wet."

"Wait, I say, you lout!"

He slammed the window, shot a glance at the dark sky, and proceeded to write something down very quickly.

Moritz gazed for a while at the line of carts over which the rain was beginning to pour, then said carelessly: "The wool is not likely to weigh much more; I see the bales are of new canvas."

"Too clever by half, you are!" was Grosglik's reply; and he ordered tarpaulin to be spread upon the bales. Presently he went on to say, offering Moritz a cigar with much courtesy: "I knew your father very well. A sharp-witted fellow, only he—made an unwise bankruptcy." And he added significantly:

> "Whom evil fortune follows fast
> Gets handcuffs and a chain at last."

"But how do you like my plan?"

"And, do you know, your mother was my cousin."

"Yes; she sold remnants in Piotrovska Street, and did something in the pawnbroking line."

"You are like her; she was a splendid woman—opulent charms, you know.—I'll tell you what. You've a good head, and I like you. And as I like intelligent young men, and enjoy helping them, I'll help you. I find your plan good."

"Yes, I knew you for a brainy man."

"We shall be associates in this affair."

"Will you assist me financially?"

"I will."

"And with ample credit?"

"That I shall get for you."

"Good. In token of partnership, let us embrace."

"Excellent! Better embrace a hundred times than lose thirty thousand roubles once!"

They then discussed the particulars of their partnership at some length, and elaborated the plan of action together.

"That's one business settled; I am now going round to arrange another: to propose marriage."

"How much?"

"Mela Grünspan!"

"Wait a bit till they are clear of the Grosman affair."

"No; they'll be readier to agree now, since I may be of use to them."

"Why, I like you very much, Moritz; so much that if my Mary were grown up, I'd give her to you with a hundred thousand roubles!"

"Too little."

"Well, say a hundred and twenty, and wait a year for her."

"Can't. Two hundred thousand, or it's not worth while my waiting."

"Well, that's no matter. Come and dine with me on Sunday. We shall have company—Warsaw people. And then I'll let you into a little project that may mean a million."

Again they embraced, and still more affectionately. But this did not prevent the banker from making Moritz sign an acknowledgment for the thirty thousand roubles received.

"I like you so much! Fairly, I am enraptured with you," Grosglik said, with a beaming face, putting the paper away in his safe.

Moritz took Vilchek out with him, but at the door there

stood a ruffianly-looking man, who barred Vilchek's way.

"Excuse me; I'll come over to you to-morrow; I must say a few words to this fellow-citizen," he said to Welt, and nodding farewell to him, and beckoning to the man, he went with him towards the railway station.

CHAPTER XII

ONLY be determined, and you can have what you choose," Moritz thought as he walked along.

He had been determined—and now the thirty thousand roubles were safe in his pocket. He was determined to finish off Boroviecki; he relished the thought of getting the man's money, and his good work into the bargain. Yes, he was going to make a good meal of him!

He was also determined to marry Mela, and marry her he most certainly would. To him, at that moment, impossibility was out of the question.

Flushed with his first great victory, he was filled with pride and confidence in himself. "I need only to be brave, and to have will-power," he thought, looking up at the sun, with a proud smile. It was coming out above the town, and shining radiantly down upon the side-walks and the roofs, which glistened in the rain.

"I must buy myself a present to celebrate the day," he said, looking at a jeweller's shop-front. He went in. A ring, adorned with a large brilliant, had caught his fancy, but its price repelled him, and he left the shop without making any purchases. He entered a haberdasher's instead, where he got some gloves and a tie.

"They'll have to buy me a betrothal ring, in any case," he said, as he walked on to make his next stroke of business, and get engaged to Mela without loss of time.

From a matchmaker, secretly engaged by him to give all news about the Grünspan family, he had learned that, Mela having broken with Vysocki, Bernard Endelman had proposed to her by letter, and been rejected; and that this was

supposed to be the reason why he had turned Protestant, and was expected to marry some "French monkey." He was also informed that the sons and heirs in several good firms were all willing, but that she was not.

"Why shouldn't she take me?"

He glanced mechanically into a shop-front mirror, and smiled at his own image, which smiled back. A handsome fellow he was—very! He stroked his raven-black beard, settled his glasses firmly, and walked along, calculating his chances.

Of ready money he had a little; of credit at Grosglik's a good deal; of scrupulosity not the least shadow. And so he saw the most splendid future opening before him.

Mela was a very good match, and he had long felt a great liking for the girl. True, she had that infatuation for things Polish; she loved noble deeds and generosity, and conversations about the higher life. But all that would cost him little, while the effect in the drawing-room would be excellent. And he himself, in his student days, at Riga, had he not many a time advocated similar ideas, and made speeches on matters of æsthetics, and thundered against the conventions of the day? Nay, he had even for a year embraced socialism; yet that had by no means prevented him from doing good—very good—business.

Here he remembered with a smile old Grosglik's recently horrified face.

"Moritz! just wait a bit!"

He swung round.

"I have been over all the town in search of you," said Kessler, as they shook hands.

"On business?"

"Oh no! Just to ask you to an evening party at home. There will be some company."

"A little private revelling, eh? Like last year?"

"No. A friendly tea, and conversation, and a few surprises."

"Are the 'surprises' natives of Lodz?"

"Imported, most of them; but there will be home-bred ones for those who prefer.—Are you coming?"

"All right.—Have you asked Kurovski?"

"Of Polish brutes I have enough in my factory already! I'll have none in my house, at any rate. His lordly airs set my back up. He'd have you think he's doing you a favour to shake hands with you! Damn the fellow!" he muttered, and went on to say: "I saw Grosman just now—released on bail."

"Ah, that's news for me; I was on my way to Grünspan's."

"I'll give you a lift there; only I must first step into the factory for a while."

"Do any 'surprises' belong to your factory?"

"Just so. I want to make a choice from the spinning-room."

"What? Will they be at your beck and call?"

"They're trained to be. If they're not, there's a short way with them: turn 'em out."

Moritz laughed, and went off in Kessler's carriage, which presently stopped in front of his and Endelman's factory.

"So wait a little, please."

"I think I'll go in with you. My opinion may be of use."

Passing through the great courtyard, they came to several low buildings, containing the room for washing the raw wool, the sorting-chamber, the carding-room, and the spinning-room. There were only men at the washing-troughs, with water splashing all about; but in the carding-room there were heard women's voices, immediately hushed at Kessler's entrance. The working-women, mute, with eyes glued to the machinery by which they stood, were like so many automata, surrounded with masses of wool that like a dirty foam came frothing up out of the machinery, incessantly purring and growling from the many bands and pulleys.

Kessler went foremost, head bent forward between his shoulders, stooping like a hunchback and stepping slowly, with jaws working under the fell of red hair that covered them. His peaked head and long, pointed ears gave him much the look of a bat out in search of prey. His beady eyes intently sought out the youngest and most handsome of the factory girls, who either blushed scarlet under his piercing

glances, or else never raised their eyes from their machines.

He would now and again stop beside one of them, ask about their work, examine the wool, and inquire of Moritz in German: "What do you say to this one?"

And his answer would be either: "Leavings for the workmen!" or: "She has a lovely shape; a pity she's freckled."

"Since she is so pretty, she is sure to have a beautiful skin." And: "Milner!" he would shout to the foreman of the carding-room. When he came up, Kessler would ask for the girl's name, and write it down in his note-book.

They went twice round the room in different directions, but were unable to light upon anything else more suitable, most of the girls being plain, haggard, and worn out by work.

"Come away to the spinning-room! We shall find nothing better here. Only leavings."

An extraordinary stillness prevailed in the spinning-room, all white and, as it were, snowed over with wool and bathed in the brightness that fell from the skylight overhead. All the machines were working at the very top of their speed, but —so to say—with the most concentrated, breathless, noiseless activity. Only now and then was heard a short sharp creak from the revolving wheels, silenced at once with a flow of oil, and dying away in many-sounding vibrations, like the low muttering of a thunder-storm round about the machinery at work.

"That dark girl close to the yarn reeled off the spindles: will she do?" Kessler whispered, pointing to the other end of the room, where the spun yarn was being wound upon reels, and where a powerful brunette with a magnificently developed form was standing; it could be plainly seen underneath her thin dress and the wide sleeves of her unbuttoned chemise, for in the dreadful heat all the working-girls were forced to be as much uncovered as possible.

"She's perfection!—Don't you know her yet?"

"She has only been here for a month.—Hausner, our chemist, was after her, but I frankly advised him to let her alone."

"Let's go round there," said Moritz, with eyes aflame.

"Mind lest one of the machines should catch hold of you in a friendly embrace!"

They went forward cautiously along the narrow central passage. On either side, the machines were working away, winding the yarn upon huge spindles and twisting it into double threads. Jets of spray were continually at work: a tremulous spirit, in hue like rainbow flashes, gushed up and fell over the machinery, the workers, the heaps of snow-white yarn, and the thousands of spindles revolving with a murmuring sound, and in the sun's glare resembling numberless white whorls, turning frantically within bright rose-coloured aureoles.

Kessler took note of a couple more girls, and then they both went out, followed by glances of hatred.

As they went, they passed outside the main motor tower. On the threshold of that tower, inside which the enormous driving-wheel was everlastingly raging, stood old Malinovski, pipe in mouth, hands in pockets, who did not take his cap off to Kessler, nor so much as bend his head, but stood there defiantly, eyeing him with a sombre, ravenous glare.

Meeting his eyes, Kessler was somewhat startled, and seemed about to shrink back; but he suppressed his fear and went of set purpose into the tower, where the two pistons, working to and fro like hands, were turning the monstrous driving-wheel, which hissed wildly in its mad, whirling, interminable flight.

"Anything new?" he inquired of Malinovski, whilst looking at the sparks and flashes in the air, surrounding with a brilliant aureole the driving-wheel as it went round.

"I have a little matter of business with you, sir," said the old man quietly, coming up to him.

"All petitions must be made in the bureau; no time now!" he replied nervously, and went out in a hurry, for Malinovski's tone and manner did not please him at all.

"That man's grimy face is not a pleasant one!" Moritz remarked.

"Not at all," said Kessler. "He is showing his teeth; I'll have to knock them out for him."

In the bureau he gave a note, with the names of the chosen ones, to a confidential clerk, who knew what further proceedings would have to be taken; then he drove Moritz over to Grünspan's.

"A carriage will be waiting for you at about six, in front of your office," he said at parting, and vanished in the cloud of dust that rose from under the carriage-wheels.

Moritz, as he entered Grünspan's house, expressed his opinion of Kessler. "A thorough blackguard!" said he.

CHAPTER XIII

HE happened upon a family council. Grünspan senior was walking about, bawling, thumping the table. Regina, who sat by the window, was now bawling like her father, now shedding tears of rage. Old Landau sat at the table with a big silk cap on the back of his head. He had rolled back the oilcloth table-cover, and was making calculations with a bit of chalk. Grosman, pale, worn, and jaded, lay on the sofa in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and now and then threw an ironical glance at his wife.

"He's a robber, the biggest robber in all Lodz!" the old man was shrieking. "I am ruined through him—he is killing me!"

"When were you released?" Moritz asked of Grosman.

"An hour ago."

"Quite comfortable in there?" he jeered.

"You'll see for yourself when you go in there too. As you will. Only you'll be locked up for your own misdeeds; not, like me, for those of my wife and my father-in-law!"

"Albert! don't be a fool; you must not speak so. Moritz is of the family; Moritz knows how matters stand. As you put it, he might think that those things are true they say of us in Lodz." Old Grünspan spoke in anger, coming to a standstill in front of Moritz.

"What I know of the affair is another matter. I have come to you to-day as to relatives, and as to respectable people," Moritz answered pointedly.

Grünspan gazed at him in nervous excitement, and the two looked into each other's eyes for some time, each trying to

take the other's measure. Grünspan was first to avert his eyes and resume his invectives.

"See, I come to him as a man and a dealer. I say to him: 'Sell me your plot of land.' And that herdsman—that—oh! may he get what I wish him with all my heart!—laughs at me, and shows me about his dumping-ground, tells me it is a land of gold, an earthly paradise, which he won't sell for less than forty thousand roubles!—Oh, may some disease come upon that mug of yours which uttered the words!" And he called out to the next room: "Mela, child, give me my drops! I feel very unwell to-day and I shall get worse."

"What is all this row about, and against whom?" Moritz asked; he had not grasped clearly what it all meant.

"Against Vilchek. A shrewd lad. Wants forty thousand roubles for four acres of building-land."

"Are they worth the money?"

"They're worth fifty thousand now."

"Yes; building-plots have risen by thirty per cent."

"Just so. And no one can tell where this rise will stop; and the old man must buy it, to enlarge his factory."

"Then why does he hang back so, and raise Beelzebub over it all? In a few months he may have to pay double for it."

"You see, Father is a petty shopkeeper still; can't forget his little doings once in the Old Town, and his hagglings over a few kopeks," Grosman observed, with a sneer.

"Good-morning, Mela!" Moritz said, starting to his feet and going to her.

"Good-morning to you, Moritz. Thank you so much for the flowers. I was delighted with them."

"Had the florist had any more beautiful, they would have been yours."

That day she was looking very wan. There was a dash of sadness in her smile and in those eyes of hers, now sombre, and larger seemingly than before, because a little sunken and surrounded with discoloured rings. Her movements, too, were unusually limp, and she dragged her limbs about like a person exhausted by suffering. She gave her father a lump of sugar, soaked with medicinal drops, looked frigidly at

her sister, and of set purpose ignoring Grosman's outstretched hand, passed on to the next room.

Through the open door Moritz saw her face bending over her grandmother, in her arm-chair at her unchanging place by the window. His eyes followed all her leisurely gestures, and the noble contours of her body; and somehow he felt his heart beating more quickly, undergoing some emotion of the better sort. So he paid but little attention either to the old man's invectives, or to the whining reproaches of Regina, complaining that Grosman had defended himself feebly in presence of the investigating official, and was about to ruin them by his stupidity.

"Bah! children, enough of this. All will come right. Some loss there will be, but the whole business will have brought us in seventy per cent. I shall apply to Grosglik at once, who will settle with the informers by means of a go-between. We are not to be mixed up with it in any way."

"And he'll have to take the matter up in a straightforward way, unless he wants to have only five, instead of thirty thousand roubles."

"Yes; for even if things go well with us, he will not get more than fifteen—or twenty thousand at most," Grosman put in, with a sardonic smile at his father-in-law.

"You have spoken wisely, Albert. We shall give him twenty thousand, not less.—But enough of that now; let's talk over our building project. You, Albert, are not to return where you were. I have formed a big plan. We'll purchase Vilchek's plot, and with my factory as a nucleus, start a great joint-stock company: the firm Grünspan, Grosman and Company! My lawyer will go into the legal side of the business, and my builders are to hand me all particulars of the plan in a week's time. I have long been thinking this over, and I see the time has come. A score of poor devils have gone to pot, and now they're gone, there's more room for us. We shall have a calendering department of our own. Why, too, should we buy cotton already spun? We shall have a spinning department, and that will bring us twenty-five per cent of net gain. So we'll have a factory complete

from start to finish, and with every improvement. And then we shall compete with Meyer! I was thinking of that, even before you had your misfortune; and now it has come, it will be helpful." Then he went into the details of his new joint-stock company.

Regina, in ecstasies, flung her arms about her father's neck. Moritz was likewise dazzled with the idea, and almost thought of getting his own name put third on the list of partners.

"But—not a word of all this. We must first settle Albert's affair. Moritz, you—being of the family—will of course hold your tongue."

"I should long," he replied earnestly, "to be united with you by still closer ties."

Grünspan looked at him with close calculation; so did Regina; but Grosman smiled sceptically.

"Why not? It's a feasible piece of business," the old man answered somewhat frigidly.

"It was for that I came here."

"You may talk the matter over with Mela."

"Yes, but I want first to speak with you."

"Directly, directly."

He bade Regina farewell, pressed Grosman's hand, saw them out, and came back.

"Landau may be present, of course."

He seated himself, crossed his legs, and played with his long, gold watch-chain.

Moritz tried to concentrate, chewing the knob of his cane, and readjusting nervously his glasses. He meditated how to approach the old man about his daughter's dowry. At last he said candidly: "How much is Mela to have?"

"How much have you?"

"To-morrow I shall be able to show you my assets and liabilities, and the contract I made with Grosglik this very day; it's a contract of partnership. I have no reason to deceive you. My business is solid. It does not consist in payments to be made by insurance companies who call them in question, and are to some extent backed by legal authorities."

He took care to stress the last words. "So pray answer my question."

"But how much have you got? Tell me the amount, and we shall verify all to-morrow."

"Thirty thousand roubles in ready cash.—To say that I have credit for twice that amount would be cold modesty on my part.—My education, my connexions with all the millionaires in Lodz, and my honesty (not once have I been a bankrupt!) are all important assets."

"As to bankruptcy," Landau remarked, "it would hardly have been worth your while."

"Counting roughly then, I am worth about two hundred thousand at least, roughly speaking, for a modest man does not care to boast. So what do you give Mela?"

"She has been for quite ten years educated at a most expensive school; and she has travelled abroad and learned many languages under the best teachers, specially qualified. She has cost me very much indeed."

"Well, but that's her own personal and inalienable property; it will never bring me even one per cent."

"What! not one per cent? And what about her breeding? In the drawing-room she is like a queen. She plays the piano too, and ah! what beautiful manners she has! She's perfection, she's my dearest—a diamond of the first water!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"How much do you give for the setting?" Moritz demanded bluntly.

"Landau and Company had decided to accept fifty thousand," was the evasive answer.

"Won't do. Miss Mela is indeed a diamond, and most beautiful; as spiritual as an angel, and indeed angelic in every way. But—fifty thousand?—Won't do."

"Won't do?—It's a good round sum, fifty thousand. You ought to kiss my hand in gratitude for so much. What, is she ugly or lame or blind, that I should pay you more to take her?"

"Her health is weak, she is often ailing; but of that I say not a word."

"What are you talking about? Mela's health weak? Are you out of your senses? Mela is health itself; you will see. She'll have a baby every year. Show me another girl in Lodz as healthy as she! Do you know, an Italian prince lately wanted to marry her!"

"It's a pity she didn't take him; you would have paid his bootmaker and his tailor as well."

"And you, my man; what's your firm? Moritz Welt's Commission Agency, how does it stand? What's the name good for?"

"You forget my partnership with Boroviecki."

"You are in it to the tune of ten thousand roubles. My word, what a big capitalist you are!" He laughed at him.

"To-day I am in for twenty thousand; in a year the factory will be all mine, I promise you."

"Oh, then we'll see next year," Grünspan said, outwardly indifferent, but secretly pleased to get Moritz's offer; he foresaw he would be a hard-fisted hand at the grindstone.

"Then it will be, not I, but someone else. This day Grosglik has offered me one hundred thousand with the hand of his daughter Mary."

"Grosglik might offer twice as much and find no bidder."

"And yet she has not a brother-in-law and a father suspected of arson."

"Speak lower," said the old man, with a glance towards the next room.

"If you think it's pleasant or a credit to be son-in-law of the firm Grünspan and Lansberger, you are woefully mistaken."

"Lodz knows well how much my name stands for," he replied with great self-assurance.

"Where is it known? By whom? At the police station and by the men there," he hissed brutally.

"How dare you repeat such foul gossip?" the old man retorted, stung to the quick.

A long pause followed. Grünspan paced the room, or looked out of the window; Landau sat still, stooping over the table; and Moritz, by this time somewhat ruffled, im-

patiently awaited the end of the bargaining. He had already made up his mind to make fifty thousand do, but still wanted to try if he could not squeeze a little more out of the old man.

"Is Mela willing to have you?"

"That I shall presently ascertain, but want to know how much you give me with her."

"I have told you; my word is no mere breath of wind."

"In that case, it's out of the question. I must have more for my business. To sell myself for fifty thousand roubles would never pay. My education—my connexions—my honesty—and the firm I belong to are worth considerably more than that. Reflect, Mr. Grünspan: I am neither Landau, nor Fishbin, nor any of those office clerks. I am the firm Moritz Welt. You will be investing your daughter at a hundred per cent. If I need money, it's not for dissipation.—Now, will you give me fifty thousand on the nail, and as much more in two years' time?" he asked trenchantly.

"In principle, I agree; only we must deduct my expenses: the wedding, the trousseau, and the costs of her education."

Welt was exasperated. "Mr. Grünspan," he cried, "what meanness, what abominable meanness, to inflict such grievous wrong upon your own daughter!"

"Well—well—we shall consider the matter, when Albert's trouble has blown over."

"On account of this very trouble, which dishonours her too, you ought to give your daughter ten per cent more. We both have to take your part before the public.—Then, have you said your last word?"

"I have; my very last."

"A word may be of little value; I want a bond of surety."

"If Mela only says she will have you, everything may easily be arranged."

"Very good. I go to her this instant."

"I do wish she may agree; for you're a man I like, Moritz!"

"Grünspan, though you're a sly old dog, I have the highest esteem for you."

"We shall get on very well together."

On that they shook hands.

Mela was in a tiny boudoir, where Moritz found her, lying on an ottoman, book in hand, but not reading, and looking out of the window.

"Excuse me if I don't rise; I am rather unwell.—Sit down.—Why, what a solemn air you have put on!"

"I have been just now speaking to your father about you."

"A—ah!" she drawled, but scrutinized his expression.

"I was just speaking—and began to——"

"I see—the flowers—the conversation with Father—I understand.—Well?"

"He told me all depended on you, Mela, and on you alone," he repeated so gently and with so much feeling that she turned her eyes to him once more.

He then set to telling her about himself, and how he was very fond of her, and had been so for ever so long.

With her hand propping her head, and a sad, tired expression in her face, she remained turned towards him. A strangely painful sadness, a sadness as of tears that flow constantly because no comfort is possible, a sadness as after the death of one's very dearest, was gnawing at her heart. From his very first words she had known he had come to propose to her. There was in her eyes neither resentment nor indignation; she but looked and listened, first with indifference, and then—as he began to speak at greater and greater length, and in greater and greater detail—with a sort of uneasy sense of grievance in her breast.

"Why is it he that comes to speak to me of marriage? Why is it not Vysocki, my best beloved?"

She buried her face in a cushion, to hide her tears, and not to see who it was that spoke, only to hear—hear with bated breath, only partly conscious who uttered the words. *That* she wished, and with all her strength wished, not to know. Within her soul the tears were flowing fast.—With all the power of her loving heart; with all the might of her imagination and yearning and desire and love, she called upon the other to come and set her free from this torment, and take

Moritz's place—and be transformed into him!—And this her desire was so intense that it at times gave her the illusion that Vysocki himself was sitting beside her and telling her of his love.

She was thrilled and penetrated at the sound of that gentle voice—was it *his?* for it was not Moritz she heard now, but the sounds which, on that evening in Rose's room, had sunk into her brain, and were now reproduced as in a phonograph, filling her soul with glamour and delight and bliss. She listened long, mechanically repeating certain words with deep joy, filled with the longing to say: "I love you"; and a mad desire came over her to fall into his arms and embrace him. Opening her eyes, she fixed them upon him in bewilderment.

It was then Moritz who sat there, hat in hand—the handsome Moritz!

Moritz!

And it was not love he was speaking of, not of their coming happiness with one another; nor of that ecstasy the heart feels in the love it yearns for, nor of those sweet emotions which love creates!

No, he was telling her calmly how well suited they would be to each other, and talking of the factory he was about to found, of his capital, of her marriage portion, and of the various enterprises he intended to start, and how she should never want for anything, and they should have their own carriage.

Then—she reminded herself with an effort—it was Moritz —Moritz! Almost as in a dream, she asked him: "Miecio—Moritz! do you love me?"

She was quick to correct her blunder, and would have told him she did not mean to ask him that; but he replied with strong feeling: "Mela, I am unable to say that. You know I am only a merchant, and cannot express what I feel. But when I see you, Mela, it is so well with me that I can wish for nothing else; ay, and I even forget business. And you are so beautiful, and so very different from all the girls of our people, that you are continually in my thoughts. So tell me, will you be my wife?"

She gazed at him once more. And now again it was another face, other eyes, that she beheld; and she heard the fiery, passionate, yet restrained utterance which declared *his* love! She closed her eyelids on which the kisses imprinted by another were burning still. She trembled at the delightful memory, and drew herself up, straining against the back of the ottoman; another, she fancied, was taking her in his arms, and pressing her to himself.

"Mela, will you be my wife?" he asked once more, puzzled by her silence.

She was herself again now. Rising, she said, hurriedly, and without taking thought: "All right. I will marry you. Make all arrangements with Father. All right, Moritz; I will be your wife."

He wanted to kiss her hand, but she gently withdrew it.

"Now go. I feel very, very unwell.—Go—and come again to-morrow afternoon."

More she would not say; but he was so rejoiced at the success of his enterprise that he never remarked on the singularity of her behaviour towards him, but ran off to Papa Grünspan to get the amount of the wedding portion fixed as soon as might be.

The latter, however, was not within, having had to go to his office. Moritz, returning, begged Mela to tell her father all about the matter.

He found her standing just as he had left her, looking out of the window with eyes that saw nothing nor cast any glances anywhere; pale as a sheet, she was moving her lips as if communing with her own soul, or with memories of the past.

"Very well, Moritz, I'll tell Father that I am to be your wife," she murmured drearily.

When he kissed her hand, she did not withdraw it, nor did she even note his departure. But she dropped down on the ottoman, took up a book, and lay there musing, absorbed in the roses that swung about before her window, and in the gilt glass globes that hung above the garden shrubs.

To such an extent was Moritz rejoiced that, when Francis helped him on with his overcoat, he went so far as to bestow a ten-kopek bit upon him. After which he took a cab to Boroviecki's factory.

"Wish me joy," he cried, rushing into the office; "I am to marry Mela Grünspan."

"And that means a tidy sum with her," Charles said, raising his head from his papers.

"It means quite a large sum," Moritz said, correcting him.

"Yes, supposing the insurance company is willing to pay the claims made on it," Charles replied, laying stress on the word *supposing*. He felt annoyed to learn that Moritz had at one stroke captured both a lovely woman and a big dowry, whilst he, Charles, would be condemned to toil and moil all his life.

"I have brought the money."

"Oh, I have just found that perhaps I need not trouble you at all. I have found a man willing to let me have the sum on a promissory note to be met in six months' time. And only eight per cent."

All this was mere invention. No money was forthcoming, but he had a mind to tease Moritz.

"Take it. I got it on purpose for you, paying the interest in advance."

"Keep the money for a few days; if I don't take it, I'll see you lose nothing."

"I don't like doing business in this haphazard fashion," Moritz grumbled.

"So Miss Mela Grünspan has accepted you? I am just a little astonished."

"Why? What have you against me?" he returned instantly, in high dudgeon.

"Well, you look so like a common office clerk—but that's of no consequence. Only she——"

"Out with it, please!"

"Only she is said to have been in love with Vysocki," he concluded in a tone of amazement that was not without spite.

"The thing is as true as the news of Shaya's bankruptcy, should anyone spread it."

"But why should she not fall in love with him? She's beautiful, he's good-looking. Both share certain dreams about society and that sort of thing; both have very passionate natures; I could see at the Travinskis' how they feasted their eyes on each other. People there were expecting them to marry, and already talking about it." And he pitilessly enjoyed the pain so clearly visible in his friend's eyes.

"All that's possible, but is nothing to me."

"To me my intended's past would be something. I'd never marry a woman with memories of certain past facts."

He leered so wickedly as he said the words that Moritz started up in a fury.

"How dare you say such a thing?"

"I say nothing that can outrage either her or you. I merely state my opinion. And indeed I am very glad you are making so splendid a marriage." He smiled again—a very nasty smile.

Moritz went out, slamming the door, indignant and furious with Borowiecki. So exasperated was he that he took to scolding the workmen who were pumping the water out of the foundations.

"Worker harder, you knaves!" he shouted. "Are you doing your work for love or for money? Since yesterday the level is just what it was."

"What's that?" one of the workmen shouted.

"You dare to shout to me! Do you know whom you're shouting at? You rascal, I'll have you expelled this instant!"

"Get out of this before you're hurt, you scurvy fellow! Else I'll twist your mug the way you're to go!" another man growled, shaking his fist in his face.

Moritz cleared out in a hurry, but raised such a tempest that both Charles and Max, who was in the spinning-room, came out to the workmen. Moritz insisted on having the workman who insulted him turned out at once.

"Be quiet, Moritz, and don't meddle with what's not your business."

"Not my business?" he shrieked. "I have the same right here as you have!"

"Supposing you have, that gives you no right to abuse the men, quite unjustly, as it happens."

"Supposing I have? Supposing? My ten thousand roubles are worth just as much as yours."

"Don't bawl so loud; would you boast of your ten thousand roubles before the men?"

"I don't need you to teach me what I ought to say!"

"And you need not shriek so; you surely can talk quietly."

"That's as I may choose!"

"If you choose, then shriek away!" said Charles, with a shrug, going back to his office.

Max remaining, Moritz went on making a noise, and at last retired, loudly declaring that Charles was building, not a factory, but a palace; and that he, Moritz, would bring about another order of things.

"He has got hold of the Grünspan girl's dowry; that's what makes him so cocky," Charles said to Max. But he regretted having given way to anger, for he counted on the money Moritz had brought, which was absolutely necessary to him. "Always, as often as I give way to any first impulse, I act like a fool."

Now, in spite of the wound inflicted by Charles, when he alluded to the state of Mela's affections, Moritz thought and felt as before; and he regretted all the more having been carried away by an impulse, because the whole insinuation was preposterous. He would have willingly gone back to see Boroviecki, but could not venture on such a step just then. So he put it off till later, for it was already past six.

Kessler's carriage was waiting in front of his office; he went home in it, changed clothes, and ordered the driver to start off at full speed. Comfortably stretched on soft, downy cushions, he nodded listlessly to his acquaintances as he whirled by.

CHAPTER XIV

KESSLER lived a few versts out of town, near a great dye-house, his property; he was also the principal shareholder and manager of the firm Kessler and Endelman. His mansion, or rather his little castle, built in Lodzian Gothic style, stood at the top of a hill, and rose above a forest of pine-trees. In front, a large English park spread its greenery down a somewhat steeply shelving slope, to a stream running into a deep ravine overgrown with willows and alders.

To the right of the park and beyond the trees stood the red chimneys and walls; and on the left the straggling grey thatches of a village were seen in the distance on both sides of the ravine, amongst orchards and undergrowths of various descriptions.

"You live here quite in the way of a Lodzian prince," Moritz cried on his arrival, alighting from the carriage.

"I have done all I could to bring a little order and civilization into this country of barbarians," Kessler returned, ushering him into the house.

"Have I happened upon a gala day?" Moritz cried, noticing that the other wore full dress.

"The idea! No, I'm just back from an official visit, and have not had time to change yet."

"Has anybody come before me?"

"Wilhelm Müller; he has popped over from Berlin on purpose, without his father's knowledge. Then there's Baron Oscar Meyer, and Martin—d'you know him?—a merry French dog. And some others of our set, from Lodz and Berlin. Yes, and some of our 'surprises' are here as well."

"I should much like to know them. Have you anyone here to do the honours of the house?"

"You'll see."

The whole company were sitting on a wide terraced veranda, overlooking the stream; it had been fitted up as a summer reception-room. The floor was strewn with Indian mats, woven of variously coloured grasses; the furniture was of gilt bamboo, upholstered with silken fabrics. The veranda walls were of China straw matting, with threads of many-coloured beads, each of which dangled loose from the gilt frieze above and hung down to the floor in variegated billows of sparkling glass, tinkling faintly with every breath of air.

Moritz said good-evening to the guests and sat down.

"What are you taking? We are having champagne—a refreshing drink!"

"All right; champagne let it be."

A footman brought in the wine; and after him in came the gay Sophy Malinovska, who "did the honours of the house," poured the wine out for the guests, and seated herself on a rocking-chair.

A silence fell over them all, for they were eagerly gazing at her beautiful face, her bare shoulders, and the perfection of her wonderful figure. Though slightly confused at being stared at with so much curiosity, she was all the livelier for her emotion, and her ever-changing features were suffused with a faint carmine tint.

On a sudden she said to Moritz, imperiously: "I want you to rock me!"

"Would the task be unpleasant for me, do you think?" he answered, settling his glasses; she had much caught his fancy.

"Whether it would be pleasant or not to you is indifferent to me. I want to feel myself flying up and down," she said rudely, and turned towards the open side of the veranda, to look out at the park that shelved straight down to the stream below, flashing with blue and silver, and at the dark-green patches of meadow-land beyond it, and the fields that rose

farther and higher, divided into long strips of variously tinted corn.

"Let's go out," Kessler said. "I'll show you my park and my menagerie."

All were willing to go except Müller. "I am tired by my journey," he explained, "and don't care to walk just now."

"Believe me, my boy, you'll have no luck with her," Kessler said, with a shrewd glance at Sophy.

"What!—Why, I never dreamed—" Müller stammered, confused at his intentions having been guessed at. Nevertheless, he would not give it up, and when the others had gone, drew near Sophy.

"That Müller is a very callow youngster as yet," Kessler observed to Moritz, as he walked on with the rest of the company, across the magnificent greensward.

"What makes you say so?"

"Why, he has stayed with my girl on purpose to cut me out!"

"Oh, women sometimes have whimsical tastes."

"True, but they always have a steady preference for men with heaps of money."

"Not always, oh! not always," Moritz said musingly; for the remembrance of Mela and Vysocki had flashed across his mind. "Where did you get that girl?" he continued; "she's a magnificent creature."

"Aha? is she to your liking?"

"She's a fine girl, and you feel she has temperament; that——"

"Far too much of it," Kessler interrupted. "And dreadfully unreasonable into the bargain. Yes, I'm fed up with her, I am." He scowled, swishing off the tops of some sprays with his stick, and presently went on in a lower tone: "I can turn her over to you, if you care."

"A first-rate offer, but I can't take advantage of it; not rich enough."

"You mistake me entirely. She is Polish; she craves to be loved at morning, at noon, in the evening; insists on her lover's being faithful—and marrying her in the end! I tell

you, she's a damned fool. She will weep at me for days together. Always lamenting, except when she has her tantrums and I have to quiet her—after my fashion." His eyes gleamed, and his stick swished yet louder, as it lopped off the young shoots. "If you wish, I can make matters easy. I must get rid of her somehow. You see, I've decided to get married."

"I heard some talk about that in town; Miss Müller, is it not?"

"The affair is only as yet in its first stages. But one thing is sure: I'd be most grateful to anyone who'd rid me of this female.—Would you?"

"Thanks awfully, but I'm afraid not. She has a brother, a father besides, neither of them very well-bred; and I don't want to get assaulted. Moreover, I also am about to marry."

They rejoined the company, whom Kessler then took round to several large cages wherein troops of monkeys were imprisoned. He set to teasing and stirring them up with a long stick. But at the mere sight of him they ran clustering together at the farther end of the cage. Terrified at the sight of his stick, they climbed up to the top or clutched at the side-bars, with shrill screeches of helpless fury, which provoked Kessler's mirth and exasperated them still more.

There were a good many wild beasts in other cages, and almost all of them went frantic with terror at sight of their master, or showed their teeth, with snarls. A couple of bears from Tonquin, jet-black, with beautiful yellow patches on their breasts, were so maddened by the lash he plied that they dashed at him wildly against the bars, with growls that made everyone start back in fear. Everybody but Kessler. He did not budge an inch, but thrust his face forward close to their bared fangs, and struck at those tremendous wide-open jaws, roaring with laughter, and enjoying their impotent fury.

"All this snarling is for me; and very pleasant music it is," he observed, with a broad grin.

He took them farther on, to the stags that were trotting about an enclosure—with these he was on friendly terms—and to the cages where some dogs were confined, so savage that they would dash furiously at anyone who but looked at

them; between him and them there was also good-fellowship, and he entered their cages and let them lick his hands and face.

To wind up, he exhibited his flock of white peacocks, with wonderfully marked tails, faintly rainbow-tinted. He uttered a cry, and forthwith the whole flock, opening their tails like fans, went running about over the lawn, but keeping at a distance from the company, and shrieking with shrill metallic voices.

The company returned leisurely to the palace; evening was coming down over the land. The hills were as yet agleam with the pale afterglow of sunset, but thin mists rose up from the valley beneath, moving, floating, waving about, like masses of gossamer filaments, with here and there some tree-tops or the sharp angles of house roofs emerging from them.

From the stream, and the trees, and the grass-plots there came a monotonous murmur, only broken at intervals by the loud drone of beetles wheeling overhead. From the ditches and ponds the frogs were heard croaking in chorus. A wet warm breeze blew out of the hazy distance, wafting the sound of bells tolling long and mournfully, as though someone were dead or about to die; their ponderous muffled echoes rolled tremulously through the air, dying away amid the boughs of the forest and the red trunks that in serried ranks stood close to the palace.

Sophy was not on the veranda any longer; only Wilhelm Müller, rocking himself in an arm-chair.

"She's a pretty girl, isn't she?" Kessler asked him sarcastically.

"Not so pretty as—vulgar," Müller replied.

"And so you could not come to an understanding with her?" he questioned further.

"I did not so much as attempt to," he said peevishly, twirling his moustache to hide both his confusion and a red glow on his right cheek.

Kessler courteously asked them in to supper, and at the same time the menservants threw the door wide open, dis-

covering a suite of rooms furnished with extraordinary magnificence.

Supper was served in a vast circular hall, transformed into a semi-tropical garden, so filled it was with palms and exotic flowers. A round table was in the middle, laden with plate and crystal glasses to such an extent that it might have been a jeweller's shop-front, but that instead of precious stones there were roses and orchids, which decorated the napery and the table service.

Two of the chosen factory girls were sitting at a window, the other two having declined to come. They sat there in superb toilets, but in stiff, gawky attitudes, looking with apprehension at the men as they entered. There were also a few dancing-girls; these walked at their ease about the dining-hall, talking merrily and without embarrassment.

They were the "imported surprises" Kessler had told Moritz about, and Müller had brought them with him from Berlin for the evening. They were only three, but made a noise for ten, and filled the hall with all the din of a rowdy night-club. Their toilets were loud and gaudy, ornamented with paste jewellery, and they were painted besides; all three nevertheless perfectly good-looking, slender, and with figures beautifully outlined.

The supper was a slow and somewhat tedious affair. All of them were too self-conscious to be lively. The dancers, brimming over with ribald remarks and jokes, made great fun of the factory girls, who sat confused and very nervous, almost stupefied in fact; ignorant how to eat properly, what to look at, and how to behave in general.

Sophy, however, took them in hand, and subsequently Moritz, sitting beside her, began to talk with them in Polish, in order to give them countenance.

Kessler said very little, but sat glowering, his head sunk between his shoulders, with unfriendly eyes glancing at Sophy, as she talked gaily to Moritz; or else watching the footmen, who, aware of the fact, moved about with tremulous and hasty steps. He felt himself torn with jealousy. Willing as he had been to give her up, he now—at the sight of

her merry face wreathed in smiles, bright and beautiful and turned towards Moritz, and of the eagerness with which she gave ear to what he said; seeing, too, how often it made her change colour, and with what pretty coquetry she poured out the wine for him—felt that jealousy had quite taken possession of his mind. Kessler would have ordered her to come and sit by his side had he not felt ashamed to exhibit his weakness so publicly. So he sat there, gloomy, depressed alike by the violence of his passion and the necessity of keeping it under control.

After supper they adjourned to the drawing-room, fitted up in Oriental style. All along the walls there were big sofas, upholstered with silk and heaped with cushions; the walls were hung with a fabric of green silk shot with yellow, and a greenish-yellow carpet was spread over the whole floor. In front of each sofa the footmen had put some low square-shaped stands, on which they placed many a bottle; they then drew back a curtain, which unveiled a sort of platform where a quartet of violinists were about to play.

Each guest flung himself down upon the sofa, in the most comfortable posture that occurred to him, and began to drink; at first, liqueurs and cognac poured into the cups of coffee supplied again and again by the footmen. Then it was the turn of the wines, of which they partook in such quantities, and of so many sorts, that they were presently very much flustered.

The music went on. The dancing-girls vanished to change costumes, according to plan. Meanwhile the servants brought a thick linoleum floor-cloth, well rubbed with chalk, into the middle of the room. The din went on increasing; laughter and jests passed round the room, together with the factory girls, bandied about from sofa to sofa, pushed hither and thither, kissed, pinched, hugged, forced to drink, until they so completely lost their senses that they whirled madly round to the sounds of the quartet music, which made the blood seethe in their veins, go up to their heads, and drive them into frenzy.

"Let the dance begin!" Kessler shouted, with his arm

round Sophy's waist. She was completely drunk, and in such uproarious spirits that she would every now and then wallow on the sofa with piercing screams.

And now the dancing-girls came in, with timbrels that they held in their uplifted hands. They were almost unclothed, wearing as they did only a few folds of gauze, which concealed nothing. Standing in mid-hall, they struck their timbrels in cadence. The music thereupon fell into a strain so soft, so faint, as to be scarcely audible; and the dance-melody was struck up by the impassioned tremolo of a flute, like the song of a mating bird.

The girls began the *"danse du ventre,"* at the outset rather lifelessly and listlessly. But what with the wine they were literally drenched with in the intervals of rest, and what with the thrilling melody of the flute, they caught fire at last, and it was with the utmost animation that they performed that weird, infamous Eastern dance, with its epileptic throbs, its ripples of convulsive back and forward quivering, its fever of lascivious desire—the dance of lubricity at its maddest. The flute was continually pouring forth those sweet warbling, passionate strains, possessing all who heard them with an uncontrollable desire to plunge into the deepest whirlpool of lust. Eyes blazed, bosoms heaved, lips burst into gasping cries, arms were stretched out towards the dancers, and sounds of noisy kisses were drowned in the wild lewd excitement that prevailed throughout the hall.

Guffaws and babbling and screams and the clinking of glasses united to make up a deafening uproar, above which there rose only the melodious notes of the flute; and the dancers danced with ever greater and grosser sensuality and coarseness. On the background of the silk-tapestried walls the frenzied motions of those bodies, half seen through thin clouds of gauze, stood out like a vision of revelling Bacchantes. Roars of delighted laughter resounded through the room.

Suddenly Sophy lifted up her head with a long look from her eyes, now set in her head with drink. "Oh, those swine, those abominable swine!" she cried, with instinctive horror

and indignation, bursting into a violent fit of maudlin tears. Kessler beckoned to a footman to carry her to her bedroom.

But the merry-making of the Lodzian princes lasted; lasted till they could make merry no longer.

CHAPTER XV

"MAY I offer you some more tea, Mr. Joseph?" said Anne.

"No, thanks, madam," young Yaskulski answered, blushing and bowing, as he rose to continue reading the paper to old Mr. Adam.

Anne seated herself in a deep rocking-chair. As she rocked herself, she listened a little to Joseph's reading, but more to the expected footsteps of Charles, and often turned round towards the veranda door.

"Don't let the samovar go out! Mr. Charles is sure to come in presently," she called out to Matthew in the kitchen, and walked about the room, and peered through each of the windows into the dark. She stood for a moment with her brow touching the glass, and then she again seated herself in the chair, and waited with growing impatience.

It was not the first time since her arrival in Lodz a couple of months previously that she had to wait so. This interval had glided away very swiftly for Charles, but slowly indeed for her and for old Mr. Boroviecki. Immured as they were in the place—a cottage and a miserable strip of garden instead of Kurov—they were both of them afflicted with love-sickness for the country and its vast expanses, and found it hard to get used to the new surroundings of their life.

Not only did Anne suffer from this, but also from various mortifications that continually beset her, and from the secret distress of which Charles was the source. She had so ordered her day as to have as much work to do as possible, and to fill all her time with work. Notwithstanding, something undefinable was slowly preying on her spirits. She was quite at a loss what to think of Charles. She believed, nay, was

convinced that he loved her; and yet, since she had come to dwell in Lodz, she at times was assailed with doubt on that point. As yet she knew nothing for sure, and felt her suspicions to be shameful; but her heart had guessed at the melancholy truth.

Daily and with sore bewilderment she was finding him out —him that she had taken for her ideal of manhood, whom she had arrayed in all the brightness of her own bright soul, of whom she had thought only with pleasure and pride, whom she had loved from the very first, her future husband and (as she would call him in the secret of her heart) her "own dear boy"—to be quite a different man, most unlike him she had worshipped. Every day this conviction grew deeper in her mind and caused her greater pain. True, he at times was kind to her, affectionate, loving, ready to do whatever she wished. But then again he at times showed himself cold, harsh, inexorable, treating her country customs with relentless irony. He would then, in a manner most distressing to her, make a mock of her charity to the poor, and even of what he called her parochial ideals; and the steely glint in his eyes would inflict bitter agony on her, who saw with what cold indifference he looked upon her pain.

This behaviour of his she excused, as he himself used to do when in a better mood, by ascribing it to the strain on his nerves and the numerous worries which he had to undergo whilst building the factory. She had believed him at first, and borne patiently with his wayward humour. She had even reproached herself for not being his comforter, or able to make him so attached to her as to forget all his troubles and difficulties in her presence. She had also attempted to play that part, but abandoned it, on noticing a shade of irony in the grateful look with which he answered her.

Besides, there was one thing that was beyond her to attempt. Loving him as she did in all simplicity and frankness, and ready as she was to sacrifice everything for him, she was undemonstrative in her love, and quite incapable of binding him with those thousand ties—looks, speeches, touches, faltering words, and all those enchanting artifices—

which attract men so powerfully, and which they are so apt to take for true love; though it is all but mere coquetry, or the fulsome demureness of girls who are bent on making a good match. Her noble straightforward nature shrank from any such tricks, and despised the notion of captivating the affections of any man by such enticements. The sense of personal dignity was very strong in her, as also of the dignity of human nature, in which she gloried.

"Why is he so late?" she asked herself in distress.

Time crawled on very lazily. Hour after hour struck on the clock, each time the ensuing silence growing deeper, with only Joe's voice sounding more feebly as sleep was coming over him. At last, having read the paper through, he prepared to go.

"Joe, where do you live?" old Mr. Boroviecki asked.

"In Baum's factory, sir."

"Ah, is he better?"

"He says he's quite well and nothing is the matter with him. Dr. Vyoscki was there to-day and wanted to examine him, but Mr. Baum flew into a passion, and all but turned him out."

"Is the factory going still?"

"Only ten of the looms are still at work.—Good-night, sir; good-night, madam." He made his bow and went out.

"Max told me yesterday," Anne said, "that the whole place will have to be closed by October. Old Baum seems quite out of his mind; he will stay all night in the factory and work the looms. Max, night before last, found him in the great chamber going from loom to loom and setting them to work. —Ah! here comes Charles!" she exclaimed joyfully, rising, as Charles came in, shook hands, and flung himself down on a chair.

"Have you been in town?" said his father.

"As usual," was the surly response, for Charles was annoyed at his father's question; but noticing that Anne looked ill at ease, he cleared his brow, and continued in a gentler tone: "I could not be here for dinner; had to start for Piotrkov. Forgive me for not letting you know; I had no

time; it was quite unexpected.—Has Mrs. Travinska been here?"

"She has, and in the afternoon Mrs. Müller and her daughter called on us."

"Mrs. Müller and her daughter?" he repeated, rather taken aback.

"On a neighbourly visit. They are very nice people, and praise you very much. But they complain you neglect them."

"How can they? I only went to see them now and then." He gave a scornful shrug.

Anne looked surprised. Mada had told her explicitly that in spring Charles used to take tea with them almost every day.

"Isn't that Müller girl a perfect goose?"

"She seemed quite a sensible person, very simple-minded and straightforward; too straightforward if anything—I can't make out, though, why Max always speaks of her with so much dislike."

"Max gets easily prejudiced," he answered, though he knew why his partner did not like Miss Müller.

He took his tea hastily, just to avoid paining Anne, for he did not care to take anything. Meanwhile he thought over the Müllers' visit, and why they had made it. Had Anne herself sought their acquaintance?—Perhaps.

He asked for particulars, and she gave them all, saying in all sincerity that she had been not a little surprised.

"Then," he reflected with annoyance, "this must be Mada's doing. Yes, she's a sharp girl."

As he had not yet quite abandoned the thought of one day becoming old Müller's son-in-law, he would have much preferred the two girls to have remained apart; his position would in that case have been far less awkward.

"You will have," he said carelessly, "to pay them a return visit."

"I don't much like making new acquaintances."

"That I quite understand; besides, they are not of your class at all."

"Well, one of these days I shall call on them along with Father, and that will be the end of it."

He then casually related, as facts he regretted, several instances of the vulgarity and the upstart whims both of Mada and her father, exaggerating what was ridiculous in their ways on purpose to deter Anne from any further acquaintance with them, if she had had that idea. He then enlarged on the topic of his own trials and troubles.

Anne listened very attentively, looking with pity at his haggard face and dark rings round his eyes. When he had ended, "Is the work nearly finished?" she asked.

"In October I must absolutely set the factory going, if only in one of the departments; yet there's still so much to do, I'm afraid to think of it."

"You will take a good long spell of rest later."

"Rest? But later there will be still more to do! For whole years I shall be forced to strain every nerve to the utmost, so that by some contrivance, under fortunate circumstances, with good customers and plenty of capital, the business may be got to stand upon its own legs; till then I cannot dream of resting."

"But will this be continual—this wearing, fevered life you are leading now?"

"Yes, continual! And there is into the bargain the dread lest all I have done may come to nothing."

"You would not have to toil so hard in Kurov."

"Are you speaking seriously?"

"What she says, I say too," his father put in, looking up from the game of solitaire he was playing.

"I have long thought it over," she said. And nestling closer to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she set about depicting the happiness and peace of a country life in glowing and vivid colours.

He was smiling, but with pity. "Let her give the reins to her fancy if she chooses," he thought. He took up one end of her long, thick tress, and inhaled the wonderful fragrance of her hair.

"We should be happy there and at rest, and no one should

interfere with our joys; they would be lasting and quiet," she continued, warming to her subject.

But Charles was all the time comparing the words she said with other words—those of so many other women who, fascinated by their love, had dreamed of bliss at his side. Only an hour ago Lucy, from a tryst with whom he had now come, was telling him just the same. Still smiling, he laid the tips of his fingers upon the cool hands of his betrothed. He felt that they gave him no electric thrill, as Lucy's did, and that Anne's were much less fair to see.

Anne went on, weaving a fairy web of dreams and desires, which she sincerely hoped might be realized.

"But where," he said to himself, "where have I heard all this before? And from whose lips? Ah!" And suddenly there flashed on his memory the evenings he had spent with Mrs. Likiert and many another woman besides; and many a face rose up, and many a kiss, and many a plighted troth, and many an embrace of loving arms.

He was very much fatigued after that day's appointment, and had been so entirely under the spell of Lucy that he still felt strongly agitated. He fell into a reverie brought on by nervous exhaustion; and, while hearing Anne's voice, he seemed to hear yet another—the voice of all his former loves, risen in his memory from the dead. There they were, calling to him, thronging around him, touching him; he almost heard the rustling of their dresses, almost saw a gleam of faces white as alabaster; their smiles were about him, and their wondrously enchanting words; and the vision was materializing.

He shook it from him, put his arm round Anne's neck, and pressed to her brow those lips of his, still hot from the kisses of another. In her surprise at a caress so little expected, she raised her face to his. At that moment, the very first of such close meeting between them, he saw her to be—unspeakably sweet indeed, tender, attractive, full of dignity and goodness—but no, not beautiful!

His icy look of appraisal moved Anne strangely, and brought a hot flush to her cheek. She pulled a silk hand-

kerchief out of his breast pocket and dabbed her face to cool it.

"What perfume is this?" she asked, to give herself countenance; that look of his had damped all her enthusiasm.

"Violets, if I remember well."

"No, it is mingled heliotropes and roses," she answered, with a smile and a careless glance at the handkerchief.

It was an exquisite piece of silk, with lace borders, and an embroidered monogram in the centre. He had snatched it from Lucy, and one end had been peeping out of his breast pocket.

"Ah, yes, you are right; heliotropes, of course." And he seized the handkerchief and put it back—just a trifle too hastily. "Against my orders, Matthew will keep on scenting my things. Better if he took proper care to let no articles get changed in the wash." He tried to say this offhandedly, but he knew that Anne disbelieved his clumsy explanation.

He sat a little longer, endeavouring to bring the conversation to a point of tender intimacy, but Anne's cold look of suspicion baffled his attempts completely, and he took his leave in a short time.

Anne, as was her wont, went to see him out; Matthew was there holding a lantern.

"Matthew, you must not put such strong scents on your master's handkerchiefs," she remarked.

"But I don't scent them at all; master has no scents in his room," he answered drowsily.

Anne shot a glance at Charles, saw his manifest confusion, and started at its evident significance.

"Will you come to church with us to-morrow?"

"If possible, I will; but I'll let you know in time." And he was gone.

Anne went in slowly, had the lights put out, gave directions for the morrow, said good-night to old Mr. Adam, and was in her bedroom at last. She stood for some time by her window, passing the facts in review as she looked up into the depths of the sky.

"After all," she concluded, "these things do not concern me."

That was false. They did concern her—much more than she would have wished. But her pride forbade her to admit that she saw the meaning of the facts before her; it was too humiliating, too distressing.

"I am certainly not going tc stand in the way of his happiness!" she said the next morning, after a sleepless night; and in the wounded pride of her feelings she took a stubborn resolve not to weep, not to complain, and to shut within her heart whatever she had to endure.

At breakfast she looked as serene as usual. The maidservant informed her that a deputation of working-people wished very much to speak with her. There were quite a number of men and women on the veranda, clad in their best, and looking very solemn.

When she came in, Soha, a wagoner in Boroviecki's pay, advanced, kissed her hand, and bowed almost to her feet, according to the immemorial custom; then, stepping back a pace or two, he cleared his throat, looked at his wife by his side, and began thus in a loud voice:

"Well we have taken counsel together and come to thank you our beloved mistress for the lad whose bones were broken and ye healed him and likewise for that woman the widow of Michael killed by the fall of the scaffolding and for the children who are left orphans after Michael was killed by the fall of the scaffolding and for the kindness ye have shown to all of them."

The sentence was delivered in one breath, the orator turning now to his wife, now to his fellow labourers, who nodded and moved their lips as if speaking together.

He paused to take breath, and continued: "We are poor forsaken creatures and you lady though not one of us have been as good to us as any mother could have been our people unites to thank you for your goodness with all our hearts presents we bring none presents—you! you fellows! Kiss the lady's hand! kiss her feet!" he shouted to the workmen, thus

cutting short his speech, which he did not know how to finish.

After this energetic peroration all came round Anne, some kissing her hands, and some, more bashful, only her elbows. Anne, overcome with joy and deeply moved, could not utter a syllable; so old Mr. Adam spoke a few words on his own account, and ordered a glass of vodka for each of them.

Towards the end of this scene Charles came in and guessed what was going forward. He ordered drinks all round a second time and a bit of breakfast for all, and shook hands very cordially with the working-people, though there was a tinge of irony in his smile. When they had withdrawn, he began to make fun of what had occurred.

"A most moving spectacle! I thought it might be harvest home, only there were no songs, nor wreaths of corn. Garlands of gratitude instead, and grateful hearts singing your bounties!"

"You can laugh at everything, I see, and it's an easy pastime for you, since you engage in it so very frequently," Anne replied, calm externally, but inwardly boiling with anger.

"That's no merit of mine; you give me so many opportunities."

"Thank you for being so straightforward. I am well aware that all I do is in your eyes ludicrous, foolish, petty, parochial—everything is a matter of gibes on your part, which amuse you all the more because they are painful to me. Is not that so?" she said indignantly.

"Each of your words is an accusation, and a grievous one!" Charles replied.

"But each is true."

"No. Absolutely false—fancies of yours that distress me exceedingly!"

"Distress you indeed!" she said with bitter irony.

"Anne—my dear Anne—why will you be so angry? Why poison our lives with trifles such as these? Can you seriously find any insult to you—and criticism of your actions—in these harmless jokes of mine? Let me assure you that I never had any such intention, nor could have!" He pleaded

his cause with much warmth, being truly hurt and mortified by what she had said.

Anne paid no heed to his pleading, and left the room without a word or glance.

Charles went over to his father in the veranda, to complain of what she had said.

"I am no more among the living; I am a dead man. But I'll tell you openly that you are continually hurting Anne, setting her against you. May you never regret what you are doing now!" the old man said, with a sigh, and went on to blame him gently for his neglect of her—his fiancée—and pointed out the innumerable happenings in their daily life when he wounded her out of disregard for her delicate sensibility.

"Antonina," said Charles to Anne's maid, "ask your mistress how soon she will be ready to go to church, and say that the carriage is waiting."

She returned almost immediately, saying her young lady had gone out and left word that she was not going to church that day.

Charles flushed crimson and went out in a rage.

"You have brewed the beer, you must drink it!" his father called out as he went.

Anne, much incensed, had indeed gone to see Nina. She found her alone, sitting in a room where she was drawing with crayons at an easel. The subject was a nosegay of China roses, laid out before her on a ground of beautiful pale-green stuff.

"How good you are to have come! I was just going to write you a word."

"What, are you by yourself?"

"My husband is off to Warsaw, and will not be home till evening. I have enough of drawing, and don't care to read, so I thought of proposing to you a short excursion out of town—just a breath of fresh air. Shall you have time?"

"As much as ever you like."

"But—what of Charles?"

"Surely I am grown up, and free to dispose of both my time and myself."

"Ah—" Nina could not help exclaiming, but said no more, for the footman ushered in Mr. Kurovski. He, on hearing that Mr. Travinski was from home, was about to withdraw.

"No, stay here. We shall dine together, and afterwards have an excursion out of town, all three of us. You will be our protector and comforter, won't you?"

"Your protector, yes."

"But we both absolutely need a comforter."

"Very good. I'll soothe your sufferings, but you must first be sufferers. Only I'll have you know that tears mean nothing to me, and I don't care how much or how fast they may flow."

"Then you don't believe tears mean suffering?"

"Excuse me; I was speaking of women's tears."

"Some have played you false, and you take your revenge on us all!"

"Exactly so: the jilted man is taking his revenge!" he returned, in high spirits.

"He will not be able to do so. We belong to the class of women who never weep. Don't we, Anne?"

"At any rate," was the low reply, "no one shall hear that we suffer, or see us shed tears."

"That's a nobility of soul which I admire; and if I were a lawgiver, I'd make a law that all women should follow your example."

"And no one would obey. To make people happy it is enough if they are thought unhappy by others."

"A big paradox, but with a great deal of truth in it. Man is in his nature essentially a poetical, if not a sentimental animal. A modern Linnæus might well rank us among the 'Lachrymalia.' But no matter for that. Is Charles to be here to-day?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

Kurovski's piercing glance, darted at Anne, saw nothing but the serenest unconcern.

Towards the end of dinner, which (owing to Kurovski's successful exertions to bring Anne into a more cheerful frame of mind) had proved unexpectedly gay, the question where they should go was mooted.

"Not to Helenov at any rate; too many people there to-day."

"We shall go quite out of town. What a pity Travinski is not here! I should have proposed a five-o'clock tea at my diggings. Besides my hut, there's a garden and a little water; we could cool ourselves there."

"Is it far from Lodz?" Anne wanted to know.

"If you take a short cut, something over five versts."

"I suppose there's some sort of farm-work going on there."

"I," he said, "am a landowner, with forty acres of arable land. But—but all the work I do is in my factory. I neither know nor care for farming."

"Well, Charles told me in spring he had seen you sowing barley with your own hands, ever so far away from your laboratory. So there!"

"Charles was joking. I assure you he was," Kurovski declared; for he kept his love of farming a secret, and talked of the occupation as mere clod-hoppers' work.

"Ladies, I'll show you where and how the Lodzian masses take their pleasures," he said, helping them into the carriage, and ordering the coachman to drive over to Milsch's wood.

The town was dead quiet, all the shops were closed, the windows shuttered, the taverns silent, the streets empty and flooded with sultry air, tremulous in the pitiless dazzling sunshine. Along each side-walk the trees stood motionless, with drooping leaves. They were overwhelmed by the mighty heat pouring down from a white-hot sky, which, like a thick woollen covering, overlay the town so completely that not one breath of air blew in from the open to cool the torrid pavements and the baked walls.

Kurovski was very closely studying Anne; and his large hazel eyes, not unlike those of a tiger, watched her features narrowly and with concentration. But she—engaged as she

was in repressing the sense of remorse which came to her now, asking whether she had done well in inflicting such pain upon her Charles—did not notice his scrutiny.

"Is it here we are to stop?" Nina demanded, when the carriage pulled up in front of a large garden-restaurant, whence came floating a tumultuous noise—voices mixed with the sounds of a military brass band.

"We are only going through to the grove."

They made their way through the garden thronged with people and resounding with a deafening uproar. Some hundreds of trees, both large and small, all bearing yellow shrivelled foliage, scantily shaded the trampled grass and the sandy paths and alleys. Dust rose in clouds all about them, settling on the trees, on the many tables, covered with white napery, on the crowds of people seated at them and enjoying the beer that waiters in soiled dress-suits were continually bringing them.

Seated on a raised platform, the military band was playing the "Sentimental Waltz," while in the main building of the restaurant, surrounded by several verandas, dancers were footing it merrily in spite of the intense heat. Some had pulled off their coats, some their waistcoats too, and stamped and kicked and shouted all the more lustily for their scanty attire. Numerous enthusiastic spectators, crowding at the doors and the open windows, were handing tankards of beer to the dancers within, thus showing their appreciation of the performance; but a good many were also dancing outside, amid clouds of dust, to the accompaniment of reports from a shooting-gallery and the rumbling of balls in a bowling-alley, together with the din of toy trumpets all about the garden.

There were also several small boats on a tiny piece of slimy, stagnant water, in which some couples of sweethearts were broiling in the sun, plying their oars with might and main, and singing some popular song, all about groves and love and beer, in tones of languishing tenderness.

"Let us go from here; I can't stand it any longer," Nina said, rising from the table at which they were seated.

"Yes, I fancy you must have had enough of popular amusements and democratic surroundings," Kurovski laughed, as he paid for the beer, which they had not touched.

"Of dust and vulgarity I have enough. Let us go to the grove; perhaps we may get a little fresh air," she said, with her handkerchief to her mouth, for the dust kicked up was more and more stifling.

But there was no fresh air in the grove, either.

"Do they call that a wood?" Anne cried, astounded, coming to a standstill among the trees.

"That's what the Lodzian folk call it." And they went on farther into the grove.

The place was still, but with the stillness of oncoming death. In every direction multitudes of begrimed trunks were seen standing mournfully, their sickly branches hanging down, their life slowly ebbing away, and the shadows which they threw creating a sombre and sinister impression. There they stood, still as if petrified; and if at any time a breath of air played among their boughs, they would rustle faintly, sadly, shuddering like one in a fit of tertian fever, and then were again motionless, plunged, as it were, in a grim and dismal reverie, as they bent over a narrow rivulet contaminated with waste factory products. It traversed the grove, a sinuous streak of coloured liquid amongst the shadows and the blackened trunks, emitting horrible and stifling emanations, and forming in places quagmires and bogs of thin slime. It soaked into the hearts of the mighty trees, whose gigantic roots spread like tentacles far into the earth, little by little sucking up the poisoned ooze, and with it their own death and destruction.

Yet even round those dying trees, there were plenty of people full of boisterous rollicking mirth. Groups were camping all about, barrel-organs playing amain, and accordions without number; and samovars smoked, and children flitted about like butterflies amongst the gloomy shadows. Here and there was dancing, too, and a confused din of many voices mingled with the sounds of the music.

"Their pastimes are a sorry sight!" Anne remarked. "Why

are so few of them heartily enjoying themselves? Why are they not—all of them—shouting, singing, drinking in freedom and rest and life to the very utmost?"

"Why? Because they have not the strength—and, if they had, would not know how," Nina replied. "They rest from yesterday's toil, but have not forgotten it yet, and tomorrow's toil casts its shadow before." And she pointed to several families seated under trees, passive, quite exhausted, and seeming to wonder, as they looked about them, at those that could dance and laugh.

"I should like," Anne cried, "to go out beyond this wood, and catch at least a glimpse of the country."

They did so, but not for long; what they saw was not like what Anne had expected to see. There was only a great expanse of waste land, with brick-kilns scattered about, red factory chimneys, houses several storeys high, and a road deeply strewn with coal-dust, along which some cyclists were trundling their bikes.

Soon they were back in town. Anne went home, thinking to find Charles there. He had not even come in to dine.

In the garden, old Mr. Boroviecki was asleep in his wheelchair. A silence like that of extreme lassitude pervaded the whole dwelling. On the veranda, sparrows twittered and pursued one another; Anne's entrance did not frighten them at all. She walked round the garden, looked into every room, and then—was at a loss what to do further.

She took up a book, and sat down in the veranda; but reading was beyond her power. She stared vacantly at the white clouds gathering in the east, and listened to the Office of the Blessed Virgin, that the maidservant was singing in the kitchen, which recalled the country so powerfully to her, and filled her with such vague yet bitter yearnings, that she melted into tears; why, she could not say. Horribly alone she felt—abandoned, and somehow far away, somewhere beyond the world.

But old Mr. Adam was now calling her; she went out and wheeled him into the veranda.

"Has not Charles been in?" he asked.

"I cannot say, I returned only just now."

They spoke no more, nor did their eyes meet, for a long time. At last the old man said, hesitatingly: "Might we not as well say vespers together?"

"The very thing!" she exclaimed joyfully, and went at once to fetch her prayer-book.

"You see," he said, "this reminds me of Kurov." He took off his hat, and, making the sign of the cross, set to repeating after her the Latin words of the vesper Psalms.

The stillness of early evening grew deeper, as did the approaching twilight, which was spreading its webs of haze over gardens and low thatch-roofed houses. But those roofed with zinc burned bright, as did their windows, in the rays of the setting sun; and the smoke of such factories as still worked on Sundays went up in great rose-coloured whorls and spirals ascending heavenwards.

Until dusk fell, Anne went on reading vespers; her full, clear voice, vibrating with lyrical fervour, echoed through the veranda; and the wild vine-leaves and woodbine and sweet-pea blossoms that climbed up and over the balustrade waved gently, as if in cadence with her words. Far away—a thousand miles away it seemed—the town was beginning to sound with the noise of the returning multitudes, the rattling of cabs, the dull roar of the factories, and the lamentable tunes played by barrel-organs.

Tea was served, but Charles did not make his appearance. With growing impatience, Anne awaited him. After vespers she had felt very calm, and quite resolved to tell him all her torments and misgivings.

He did not come. Instead there came Mrs. Vysocka, wearing an air of mystery and sternness. She spoke much of her son, then of men in general, going long and elaborately into the subject, as the best preliminary for what she had to say.

Anne, growing uneasy as she listened, said at length: "Dear Aunt, pray speak quite openly; neither innuendoes nor beating about the bush is any good."

"Right. Indeed I prefer it so, for I cannot speak properly

otherwise.—Let us go to your room.—And lock the door first!" she added, when they were there.

"Well, Aunt, I am listening," said Anne, settling herself in a low easy-chair, by a table on which a lamp with a bright yellow shade was burning.

"I have come, child, to ask you as a kinswoman may do—whether you are aware of what they say of you and your fiancé?"

"I was not aware that anything could be said," she replied, looking her full in the face.

"And can you guess nothing?"

"Nothing absolutely. I cannot even conceive anything," she said, with such calm that Mrs. Vysocka hesitated to say what she had intended, took two or three turns about the room, and then said with bated breath and keenly scrutinizing looks:

"It is said that Charles would be glad to marry Mada Müller, if—if——"

Anne finished the sentence for her, in a louder key: "If I were not in the way?"

"Then you know?"

"If I do, it is because you have told me."

Both were silent. Anne's head rested on the back of the easy-chair she sat on. She was looking straight before her, but with dim, unseeing eyes. The news had not shaken her to the core and at once, but flooded her consciousness in successive fiery billows. And she received them steadily, and —though she felt an agonizing tremor seize her, she bravely fought against it with all the strength of her will.

"Dearest Anne, pray don't take amiss what I have told you. In all probability it is no more than malicious gossip. I had to let you know. Tell Charles all about it quite openly, for such rumours may destroy even the greatest love. Marry as soon as you can; that will put a stop to slander, and they won't trouble you any more. And do not bear any grudge against me; it was my duty to warn you."

"Dear Aunt, I am very, very grateful." And taking her hand, Anne pressed it to her lips.

"Don't be wretched over it, either; it's nothing but idle talk. Charles has lots of enemies. Many women wanted to marry him, many more were in love; they are disappointed now, and of course take their revenge. And then, other people's happiness is an eyesore to so many!—And now, good-night!"

"Good-night, dear Aunt."

She saw Mrs. Vysocka to the door.

"If you like, I myself will tell Charles."

"No, thanks, I must speak to Charles myself.—Wait a little, I'll dress and go with you to Mrs. Travinska's."

They walked on in silence, for, though her aunt tried to keep up a conversation, Anne scarcely heard her, and answered still less, absorbed as she was, and ever more and more profoundly, in the unexpected tidings.

To get to the Travinskis' it was necessary to traverse Boroviecki's garden and factory; but the latter being closed on Sundays, they passed through the street where Müller's house stood. The windows were open, lighted, and not closely curtained, so that the interior of the rooms was quite visible from outside. Anne would have passed along without looking in, but Mrs. Vysocka looked—and stopped an instant. She was arm in arm with Anne.

All the Müller family were sitting in their parlour, with Charles in their midst. Mada, leaning forward, was telling him something very funny, to which he was giving a most attentive ear.

At the sight, Anne shrank away—and went straight home, without one word to Mrs. Vysocka. She did not weep, neither did she fall into despair, but felt mortally wounded in her self-esteem.

After dinner the next day, Charles tried to make excuses for his absence on the previous evening, but she cut him short, saying curtly and a little haughtily: "You need no excuse. You did as pleased you best. Preferring to be with the Müllers, you spent the evening with them."

Charles was offended. "I fear," he said, "I do not understand you."

"Have you ever tried? I doubt it."

"Why speak to me in this way?"

"Would you have me hold my tongue?"

"Rather you force me to hold mine."

"Oh, I do indeed, when I have to wait the whole day—and wait in vain—for one word from you!" she cried bitterly, but at once regretting her outburst, which she had not had the power to refrain from.

It did not touch Charles, and only put him in a worse humour. Both in looks and in words he showed himself annoyed and bored. Unable to conceal those feelings, he presently took his hat, and said, very coldly: "I am going to Kurov. Have you any matter of business to be settled there?"

"A good many."

"I can settle them for you."

"Thanks, but I shall be there with Father in a few days, and can do all very well by myself."

He bowed and withdrew, but returned directly. He wanted to be on good terms with her again, and perhaps felt something like regret for his treatment of her.

He found Anne where he had left her, seated at the window. She looked at him inquiringly when he entered.

"My dear Anne, why are you so angry with me? In Kurov we were open and straightforward with each other; why not be so now? If I have grieved or annoyed you in any way whatever, I beg you to forgive me; with all my heart I do!"

His voice was low, full of emotion, perfectly modulated; and he had put such an accent of sincerity into what he said that it quite moved him, and he went on to say tenderly: "I have so many worries, so many continual disappointments, that I may sometimes have been rough with you and offended you; but surely you must know that this could never have been deliberate; surely you don't suspect me to have been unkind of set purpose. Anne, please tell me you forgive me.—Do you care for me so little that you will not? —Can it be?"

He bent over her, looking into her eyes. She closed them instantly, they were full of telltale tears. His low voice, so

kind now, warmed her heart indeed, but opened all its wounds as well; it recalled all her silently borne sufferings, all her desires to be loved; it dimmed her eyes and filled her heart with intense bitterness. She could not answer him—she could not. She knew that, had she spoken but one word, she would have simply burst out crying and embraced him. So she said nothing, but sat there icily cold, her pride strengthening her to wrestle with her senses, and forbidding her to manifest what she at that instant felt—the wild longing to love and to trust him in all!

Boroviecki, not receiving any answer, and deeply mortified, took his departure.

But Anne experienced afterwards great remorse for having lost that opportunity to be happy again, and wept long over the loss.

Many days, many weeks elapsed after this scene, in apparent peace and friendliness. They met, they parted in equal good-fellowship on both sides. There was even familiar talk, but no longer with the same cordiality, the same interest, the same belief in one another.

Anne endeavoured to change back to what she had once been—a tender loving fiancée—but found to her dismay that this was now impossible, and that her love for Charles seemed to be dead within her. She always had present in her mind Mrs. Vysocka's warning, which shed a significant light upon certain words that Charles had let drop, but which she only now pieced together and pondered seriously.

There were others, too, who did not spare their less openly given warnings. Max, for instance, would blurt out something now and then; but the chief was Moritz, who would, most gently and in delicately veiled terms, let her know many a detail as to Charles's plans and the hard position he was in. Formerly she had paid no attention to things of the sort; but now she was learning to discover the truth concealed under those hints and ambiguous sayings—the truth, so bitter, so insulting to her dignity, that, had it not been for old Mr. Adam, she would immediately have left Lodz.

Yet at times there were awakenings in her heart; her dying

love would start up with a cry, suppressed at once. In spite of all, she did love him, and could not submit quite passively to her fate. Externally there was no break between them, but they were both drifting further and further apart.

As to Boroviecki, entirely taken up by the building of his factory, now approaching completion, he had but little either of time or of attention to give to his fiancée, though he felt that Anne was more and more low-spirited, and seemed to move in an atmosphere of chilly indifference. He intended to settle everything, once the factory was started; meanwhile, being ill at ease in her house, he went oftener to see Miss Müller, and his trysts with Lucy became more frequent.

CHAPTER XVI

SINCE October the first, a manufactory of cotton goods, under the firm: Charles Borowiecki & Co., has been established. Bonds, promissory notes, &c., will be signed either by C. Borowiecki or by M. Welt.

Having read over again this item of commercial news, Borowiecki took it to Yaskulski.

"This has to be sent to the papers to-day, and to-morrow to a certain number of firms, the addresses of which will be given you by Mr. Moritz."

He then went out into the big courtyard, which still was littered with rubbish and with pieces of machinery. Although the factory was now officially started, in reality only the spinning department was as yet in working order; but the other departments were being made ready at full speed. For various reasons Charles could not and would not await their final completion. The spinning-room alone, therefore, had been set working; and this was the day fixed for the starting of the machinery.

Charles moved about in a state of extraordinary excitement and disquietude. In the spinning department he thoroughly examined the results of the trials, of which Max was the director. Max was all over perspiration with work, husky with shouting, exhausted, begrimed, rushing about from chamber to chamber, stopping a machine, adjusting it, starting it again, and all the time attending with a watchful eye to the whirring spindles, and looking carefully over the yarns that were spun.

Old Yaskulski just then came in and whispered to Charles that a person was waiting for him in the office, wanted to see him instantly and would take no denial.

"Who can it be? Don't you know the man?"

"I'm not sure," Yaskulski stammered, "but I think it's Mr. Zuker."

"Zuker? Zuker!" Charles repeated, not a little upset, and with an odd feeling at his heart as if it had stopped beating. "I am coming; tell him to wait a bit."

"Zuker—wants to see me!—What's that, I wonder?—Is it possible that——?" He stopped, afraid to finish the sentence.

Zuker sat in the office, close to the window, with eyes cast down, and hands on the top of his stick. At Boroviecki's entrance he ignored the other's extended hand, and, omitting the usual salutations, glared at him with fiery eyes.

Charles, though he contrived to hide his uneasiness, felt like a man entrapped. Those eyes burned into him, confused him, intimidated him. A mad impulse came over him to get away; but he controlled himself, even to stilling his heart-throbs, shut the window to lessen the uproar of the workmen drinking close at hand, offered Zuker a chair, and said leisurely: "I am delighted to see you, and only regret not to be able to give you much time; for you see we are starting our factory to-day."

He dropped heavily into a chair, feeling that he could not just then have spoken a single word more; what he had said was half-consciously uttered.

Zuker took a crumpled letter out of his pocket and flung it on to the desk.

"Read that!" he said in a hoarse voice, gazing intently into Charles's face.

It was a coarse vulgar charge concerning the relations of Charles with Lucy. Boroviecki read it through slowly. He wanted to gain time, so as not to give himself away, and to maintain his cool impassive attitude under the persistent scrutinizing gaze of Zuker's burning eyes, which pierced him to the very soul. He read and returned it, at a loss what to say to the man.

Then came a protracted, agonizing pause. Zuker gazed on,

all his powers concentrated in that one ravenous, raging look, eager to unveil the mystery hid behind Boroviecki's grey eyes. The latter lowered them from time to time, mechanically shifting some article on his desk, while it was borne in upon him that one minute more of that unspeakable torture of suspense would force him to yield himself up.

But Zuker rose from his chair, asking in a low voice: "What am I to think of this, Mr. Boroviecki?"

"That is a matter which concerns you alone," was the reply; for Charles was uncertain whether Lucy had not confessed everything. His legs shook under him, and he felt stabbing pains all over his head.

"Am I to take this for your answer?"

"Why, what else would you have? Should I—*I!*—answer so vile a calumny?"

"But tell me what I am to do, what I am to think of this letter?"

"Seek out the writer, clap him in jail for libel, and say nothing—not one word—to anyone about the matter. I may help you in your search, for this touches me too—and nearly."

He had by now quite recovered his self-possession, for he understood that Lucy had not spoken. He raised his head, looking Zuker calmly and fearlessly in the face. Zuker took a few undecided steps about the room, and, seating himself once more, drew several deep breaths and proceeded to speak with a violent effort.

"Mr. Boroviecki, I am a man just as you are. I too have my feelings, and even some sense of honour as well—and I call upon you in the name of God Almighty—I come to get an answer to my question. What this letter says, is it true—or is it not?"

"*It is not!*" Boroviecki returned, with a strong stress on the words.

"I am a Jew, a common Jew—you know I shall neither shoot you nor call you out; so, whatever you may say, what can I do to you? Nothing—nothing!—I am a plain man who

loves my wife with all my heart, and work very hard for her to have every possible comfort and be as happy as a queen. Do you know that I had her brought up at my own expense —that she is everything to me?—And now this letter tells me —you are her lover! I thought the whole world had crashed down upon my head.—And she is to bear a child in the next few months! You know what that means. I have been expecting it these four years; yes, these four years!—And now—I am told this!—Whose child is it? How can I tell?—But you will, you shall tell me! I must know the truth!" he cried out on a sudden, rushing at Boroviecki with clenched fists, like a madman.

"I have already told you," Charles replied calmly, "that this is nothing but a foul slander."

Zuker stood still for a moment with arms outstretched, and then sank limply into his chair.

"You—noblemen—are fond of amusing yourselves with other men's wives.—You don't care what becomes of them afterwards—you never trouble your heads about their shame and the disgrace to their families. You are—— Oh, the Lord God will smite you for that, and spare you not!" Here his voice shook, failed, broke as though something within him had burst, and changed to a wailing sound, while big tears trickled slowly out of his red eyelids down his grey cheeks and beard—drops of unutterable bitterness.

He went on speaking, but grew calmer by degrees. He was impressed by Boroviecki's behaviour, by the kindly expression on his face, his look of sincerity, and the profound sympathy which showed itself unmistakably there—all these much inclined him to think the letter a lie.

Boroviecki, with his head resting on his hand, listened to him, looking straight into the other's face. At the same time, and unnoticed by Zuker, he scribbled a few words on a scrap of paper in the drawer of his desk that stood open. They were:

"Confess nothing. Deny all. He is here and suspects. Burn this. This evening, same place as last time."

He contrived to get the letter into an envelope, and went to the telephone connecting the house with the factory.

"Matthew! bring some wine and soda-water to the office here.—I have ordered wine, for I see how upset and tired you are. Believe me, I feel the profoundest sympathy for your position; and as to this false accusation, do not trouble any more about it."

Zuker started. It seemed to him that in Boroviecki's voice and features at that moment there was something that rang false. But he could not follow up his impression, Matthew just then coming in with the wine, which Charles poured out into a tumbler and handed to the old man.

"Drink this, it will do you good.—Matthew!" he called out of the window, and, running out after him, put the letter into his hand, with the order to deliver it directly without saying from whom it came, and to come back at once—with an answer, if possible.

All this had taken place so swiftly that Zuker had no suspicion of what was going forward. Charles meanwhile walked about the room, giving him particulars concerning the new factory, wishing to detain him until Matthew should be back. Zuker, though he seemed to listen, heard nothing.

After an interval of silence, he resumed: "Mr. Boroviecki, I adjure you, by all the saints you believe in—are the contents of this letter true, or are they false?"

"I have told you before, and give you my word of honour now, there is no word of truth in them."

"Then swear it. If you swore it, what you said would be true. It could not be a lie. Yes, to take an oath is a weighty matter, but it concerns all my life, my wife's, the child's, ay, and your own too. Yes, your own too! You will swear to me on this image—the image of the Virgin of Chenstohova—which I know to be most sacred for you Poles—you will swear that what the letter says is a falsehood!" he cried, pointing with both arms to the image which Anne had set up over the office door.

"You have my word that I have but very seldom seen

your wife at all, and am not even sure whether she knows who I am."

"Swear it then!" Zuker shouted once more, with such energy that Charles was more than dismayed. The old man, livid, trembling in every limb, once more repeated his appeal.

"Well, then, on this sacred image I swear to you that I neither have now, nor have ever had, anything to do with your wife; and that the letter I have seen is a tissue of lies from beginning to end!"

These words he uttered very solemnly, with his hands uplifted towards the image. There was in his voice a note of absolute sincerity. Sincere he was indeed in his determination to save Lucy at no matter what price; and Zuker threw the letter down on the floor and trampled upon it.

"Yes, I believe you. You have saved my life. And now I trust you, just as I trust myself, just as I trust Lucy. Count upon me. I shall never forget this—never!" he cried in exceeding great joy and supremely happy.

Matthew came in out of breath, and gave Charles a letter, in which there were only these words:

"Shall be there. Love! Love!"

"I must go now and see my wife; she knows nothing, but I have distressed her very much. Now I am all right. All is well with me, and so well that I'll whisper a secret to you. Have an eye on Moritz and Grosglik; they mean to crush you.—So, till we meet again, dear Mr. Boroviecki."

"Many thanks for your warning, but I can't quite make it out."

"I may not say any more.—Good-bye and God bless your father and your fiancée and all your children!"

"Thanks heartily. Should anyone happen to send you any more letters, pray let me know. This one I'll keep by me, and seek out the informer."

"Oh, I'll get the scoundrel convicted and sent to Siberia for a century! Dear Mr. Boroviecki, I am your friend for ever and ever!"

He fell on his neck and kissed him, and walked away completely satisfied.

"Moritz—Grosglik!" Charles reflected. "They mean to crush me, do they? That's serious."

He thought over the matter so deeply that he forgot all about the anonymous letter, his oath, and even the scene with Zuker, much as it had tried his nerves.

Finding no one at home, and as twilight was coming on, he got into a cab, ordered the hood to be pulled forward, and drove off to meet Lucy at the appointed place. After more than an hour's wait, which made him rather nervous, he saw her on the side-walk. He leaned out to her and she got in, throwing her arms round his neck and smothering him with kisses.

"Well, Charles, what has been the matter?" she asked.

He told her all.

"I could not guess what made him come back in such a good humour. He brought me this set of sapphires, which I had to put on instantly. We are going to the theatre to-night; he wants me to go, and will have it absolutely."

"Well, this shows we ought to avoid seeing each other for a time," Charles rejoined, adding: "if only to lull suspicion." And he embraced her.

"He said he would take me to some relations of his in Berlin, for all the time of my—you know."

She nestled close to him like a child.

"That's good; then nothing can be said against us."

"But you'll come to see me there, Charles? I should certainly die if you did not. Will you come?" she said, pleadingly.

"I will, Lucy."

"Do you love me still?"

"Don't you know I do?"

"Do not be offended; but now you are—so changed—so cold—not like my darling of old times."

"Dear, do you think such feelings as ours can last quite for ever?"

"Yes," she answered in all sincerity, "for my love grows stronger every day."

"That's good, Lucy, very good; but you must consider the position we are in. Things cannot possibly always remain as they are."

"Oh, Charles, Charles!" she moaned, shrinking away as though he had given her a stab.

"Speak lower, dear; why should the driver overhear us? Now, do not take amiss what I am going to say. I do love you, but it will not do for us to see each other so often. You understand that I cannot endanger your peace at home, nor expose you to your husband's vindictiveness. We have to be cautious."

"I'll give up everything to go with you, Charles! I won't go home; I won't bear any longer the tortures I have borne.—I can't.—Take me, Charles!" she murmured passionately, pressing to his side and covering his face with kisses. And indeed, her love was so frantic that, had he but been willing, she would really have abandoned everything and fled with him.

Such wild, extravagant love terrified him, however, and he had a great mind to tell her on the spot that he had enough of it. But he thought it would be too hard on her, who had nothing in the world but that love. And moreover he apprehended in that case some explosion on her part, which might end in compromising him too. He endeavoured to quiet her, but found it hard to efface the impression his words had left.

"When are you leaving Lodz?"

"The day after to-morrow. He is to take me himself.—Oh, come to me, Charles, come to me!—And you must be present afterwards, and see—*our* child," she whispered in his ear.—"Charles!" she cried suddenly, "kiss me again—as you used to do. Kiss me—kiss me hard—with all your might!"

But when he had kissed her, she drew away from him, and sat weeping in a corner in spasmodic bursts, and bewailing his want of love. He did his best to comfort and calm her, but it did no good; and she at last became so hysterical

that he had to drive to the chemist's for a sedative. It was no easy task to bring her round.

"Do not be displeased, Charles," she said, in the intervals of her tears. "I am so miserable, so wretched! I have a feeling that I shall never, never see you again!" And before he could prevent her, she was on her knees before him, clasping his knees, beseeching him in words that burst forth from a heart full of love and of despair to love her and not doom her he loved to unending solitude and torture! She flew to his bosom, hugged him in her arms, kissed him, cried over him; and notwithstanding that now, moved with pity, he spoke to her in words of the most ardent love, still that dread, that horrible dread which comes on those who die in full possession of their senses, gripped and wrung her heart with dire agony.

Fatigued at last, worn out with weeping and sorrow, she let her head drop on his breast, and remained long silent, grasping his hand; but her tear-drops still trickled down her cheeks, and now and again a sob would burst forth. When at length they parted, he had been compelled to give a promise that he would be at the station to see her off, though from a distance; and that he would write to her every week. He was wrong, he felt, but unable to act otherwise, given her mental state.

He drove home utterly exhausted, weighed down by her grief and the tears she had shed, and quite unnerved by the anguish that thrilled in her voice. "The devil take all love-making with other men's wives!" he swore as he entered his lodgings.

CHAPTER XVII

THE factory, or rather only one of its sections—the spinning department—was now in full swing, and Max was toiling at it with all his might. For whole days he never left the premises. As usual in the beginnings, the machinery was often out of order, and he had to play the parts at once of workman, smith, mechanician, and manager, all in one, present everywhere and doing everything, almost by himself. But how those first packages of yarn, made up, ready for sale, stamped with the title of the firm, delighted him! He esteemed himself paid in full for all his pains.

Boroviecki was most busily engaged in getting the other departments in readiness, a result he was anxious to attain before the winter season set in.

As to Moritz, he had taken in hand all the commercial and financial aspects of the concern. He, too, worked with untiring zeal. Work for the factory was work for himself, he thought; for he was becoming more and more completely its owner, as more and more of his capital was sunk in it. Charles had no more ready money; but Moritz, partly in his own name, partly in the names of his agents (chief of whom was Stach Vilchek), quietly supplied the cash needful for salaries and working expenses, while he employed other men to buy up for him Boroviecki's debentures and bills of exchange.

He now saw how right Grosglik had been, anticipating that, Boroviecki's factory once set in motion, those purchasers who had lost on shoddy goods they had bought would be likely to turn in the opposite direction. Many an agent dealing with first-class houses, and tradesmen with wealthy

and refined customers, had begun to inquire about the quality of the goods supplied by Boroviecki & Co.

But his fears were groundless. He had incautiously told them to Charles, who merely laughed at him.

"Any such thing is quite out of the question. Just consider: is it possible for our firm to compete with any one? Bucholc turns out a million metres annually; Shaya Mendelsohn has almost as many on the market; can our fifteen or twenty thousand make the least difference to them? Whose sales can we injure, pray? Note this besides; my aim is to produce goods not yet made in this country, and hitherto imported from abroad. If I succeeded well; nay, if I only got enough money to enlarge my factory in a short time—then, indeed, competition with shoddy goods would be a possibility. It's my dream, and I must realize it some day."

Moritz was silenced and withdrew.

Even had he not spoken, Charles had, ever since Zuker's warning, been keeping a watchful eye on him. He noticed with anxiety that Moritz was becoming too pushful in money matters, and had put too much of his capital into the business. This had given him much self-assurance, and he had more than once set his own will and ideas against those of Boroviecki. He was sometimes intolerably arrogant as well, and even rude; but Boroviecki merely ground his teeth and held his tongue, knowing himself helpless, because pecuniarily dependent upon him. "Money! money!" was then his mental cry of agony; and when he considered his own factory and compared it with the huge works of his neighbour Müller, he would feel a bitter pang of jealousy, and also of discontent with himself. He forgot that Müller's works had been steadily growing for thirty years, pavilion by pavilion; that those mighty walls, echoing with the din of noisy work, were the outcome of a long lapse of time; and he longed to stand on the same footing as Müller—and at once!

He calculated that, even were he to succeed as well as ever he could expect, his net income would this year be smaller than his annual salary at Bucholc's. The very thought overwhelmed him with shame. He desired to have a speedily

assured position; to be in the midst of hundreds of machines, of thousands of men, all working indefatigably, and producing millions; he yearned for the might and uproar of a great industry, such as he had been accustomed to witness at Bucholc's works, whereas all the departments of his miniature factory would together employ but three hundred men! Instead of soaring, he had to creep.

His self-esteem was outraged by so puny a result; with such far-reaching ambition he felt suffocated in that atmosphere of petty gains and achievements, of bargainings for kopeks, of infinitesimal savings. It revolted him. He simply loathed the necessity for seeking such lubricants and colours and fuel as came cheapest; especially did he loathe the continual, everlasting want of money.

"If it goes on like this, we shall have to fall back upon shoddy!" he said one day to Moritz.

"And consequently make much more money," was the other's reply.

In this frame of mind Charles spent several weeks of hard and strenuous labour. At last the whole factory was at work. Now, so long as it was only yarn that was made, the business went on briskly; after the spring catastrophe, and when autumn came, with an increased demand for goods, cotton was both dear and much sought after, so that the firm could sell the yarn off almost as soon as it was spun. But, the other sections being now in full activity, the cloth had to be quite finished off and warehoused in expectation of the selling season, which began only about midwinter. Meanwhile fresh occasions for expenditure of every description were continually arising, and instead of Borovieckí's credit increasing, it dwindled almost to zero.

The conspiracy which Grosglik had formed against Charles was working together, and in close union, surrounding the factory with a ring of iron, sapping the confidence of the public, refusing all credit, and spreading malicious rumours of the firm's impending downfall. All this tried Borovieckí's patience sorely, and caused him to turn more often in thought towards Müller, doubting whether or not to ask for

his assistance, offered so many a time. He still held back, notwithstanding; not so much on account of Anne (for he shrewdly guessed under what conditions alone Müller would be willing to assist him) as out of pride and a certain natural obstinacy that used to grow in proportion to the difficulties encountered.

At moments of complete unreserve, when he told himself the naked truth, he would make fun of what he thought his nonsensical prejudices, and curse his foolish subservience to romantic ideas—for so he named the scruples which withheld him from breaking with Anne and taking Mada to wife. But he yielded to them, all the same. If he did, it was perhaps because he now saw Anne every day, and began to understand what state she was in—no longer the laughing, artless, trustful girl of old days, but a woman; very mournful and absolutely resigned. He felt regret for her.

And meanwhile, what of Anne? She was no more than a shadow of what she had been—wasted away, the smile gone from her lips, and wearing a look of deep and—as she thought— lifelong sorrow, that had taken its place.

She would spend whole days sitting with old Mr. Adam. In the first days of November he had been again struck down by paralysis, and was brought back to life with much difficulty; now he lay a helpless wreck, unable to do more than move his hands a little, and mumble a few words. She had to tend him now, supporting every one of his whims, which were often quite childish. She read to him, and tried to invent various occupations; for the old man, weary of lying on his bed all day, could not live without something to do. All this she did, if not with pleasure, at least from a sense of attachment to the old man.

None the less, his illness caused the house to be yet more desolate than it had been; it had become like a grave in which she was forced to dwell. The days dragged by with crushing monotony, bringing with them no change either in the state of the sufferer, or in her relations with Charles.

He now spent his evenings more often at home, for his father's sake, talking about his work, and now and then con-

versing with Anne. His conversation brought her no joy, however, and their mutual want of sympathy grew still more marked.

That she felt more at ease when Charles was away she would not admit, even to her own heart. Yet his haggard, toil-worn face, and the dejected looks he would from time to time cast at her, both disturbed and grieved her. She would at such times blame herself for being the cause of all his troubles and sufferings, and responsible for everything.

Such moods could of course not last long. They were followed by phases of offended pride, as she contemplated the depths of that frigid, egotistical heart. And then, once more, she was torn with sorrow for him: he was so very unhappy!

There were also moments when she heard something like an echo, not of her former love, but of a desire for some love; the desire to know that feeling once again, to plunge into it, to commit all her life to that great and mighty billow, to be carried away by it—and so put an end to the tortures of solitude, suspense, and unavailing struggles, helped by no one but herself!

It happened that one day Nina, in a long and confidential talk, wormed out of her the secret she had kept so jealously. At the discovery, she cried: "Why, then, suffer so much? Why not part—and at once?"

"Out of the question. How could I leave Father? The very news of our rupture might kill him."

"But where you do not love, you will certainly never marry."

"The less said of this, the better. I cannot marry him; I should ruin his whole career. In order to carry out his plans, he must marry a rich girl—to get what he craves above all things—success. I cannot be a stumbling-block for him—and I will not."

"Do you love him still?"

"I cannot tell. At times I do; at others I hate him; and I always feel dreadfully sorry he is so unhappy on my account. But I somehow feel that he will never be happy."

"Such a state of things cannot last."

"Ah, life! Life is so hard a thing to bear! A year ago, and even so late as last spring, I was so happy! And where is that happiness now?" she moaned.

Nina tried to comfort her. She did not listen, but sat looking out of the window at a world dingy and snowed over with smuts from the factory smoke. The bare skeletons of the trees tossing in the wind bent forward, as it were, full of compassion, and ready to rescue her.

"What is love? That love which should last eternally, and unite two souls for ever—what is it? Of what does it consist? Of delusions—mists that any breath of air can dispel. —Did I not love? I thought I did, and believed with all my heart that I had given myself up to it for ever. Where is that great love of mine?"

"It is in this complaint," said Nina.

"What has become of it? It's slain by the certainty that I am not loved. And yet, on the contrary, a great, a true love, as I understand it, is nourished by betrayal, and feeds on its sufferings and the blood it sheds! No, what I have taken for love cannot have been that true love. I am no doubt incapable of feeling anything of the sort," she concluded in self-reproach, seeking in herself the cause of all the evil, and finding that she was alone to blame for all.

"Well, there's a sort of hothouse love," said Nina, "that perishes in the chilly air of everyday life. And there's a love, too, which, like the amœba, must wrap itself round the thing loved, and remain there so long as it can draw life from it. There is also love which is no more than a sound and has to be evoked, unable to exist in itself.—But do not blame yourself; you have done no wrong."

She said no more, for Travinski, who had just come in, was standing in the room, unwilling to interrupt the conversation.

"Are you staying at home this evening?"

"I only came to say I shall have to go out presently. It is Saturday, and we are to pass the evening together at Kurovski's."

"I have heard a good many strange things said of these meetings. What are you about there?"

"We drink and talk—talk about every possible subject. These evenings are devoted to telling the truth, telling it to each other, no matter how crude and how unpleasant that truth may be. Kurovski is our fugleman."

"Funny, isn't it? that you want to hear the truth told about you by others, when you can tell it to yourselves, and, however severe the judgment is, there is no danger of being wounded by oneself."

"Funny, but a fact. We both speak the truth and hear it spoken."

"That only shows that the whirl of factory life, business, and money-making, cannot suffice for a man of culture. He must from time to time enjoy a cold bath of self-introspection, be it only of the world of his dreams."

"Quite right. Why, even Kessler comes amongst us, to reveal his abominable self, and to outrage us with impunity! Not daring to do that elsewhere, he avails himself of so good an opportunity."

"Any man known for what he is can as easily show off for evil as for good."

CHAPTER XVIII

"I HAVE to step round to the factory for a minute, and shall then go with you. Don't care to go home," Kessler said to Moritz.

"Have tea with me then?"

"All right. I feel out of sorts. Something's wrong with me—don't know what," he said, with a shuddering intake of the breath.

They walked leisurely along the empty, deserted streets. A snow-fall had sprinkled the roofs with white, and spread a thin frozen surface over streets and side-walks. A dull greyness, just visible in the wan glimmer of a wintry night, wrapped the town in its dusky folds. The street lamps had been already put out, and every object was blurred and merging one into the other; here and there a feeble light was struck, but went out immediately.

"Must you go to the factory?"

"I have to: all the sections are doing night-work."

"I don't want to interfere—but if I were you, I should not look in to that Malinovski fellow. He has all the air of a mad dog chained up."

"A fool! His daughter costs me five thousand roubles a year; and he growls at me!"

"He was an exile once in Siberia!"

"That'll have quieted him.—But I must go and see him. He has written me a letter, and I mean to answer it in person." He grinned an ugly grin.

"About Sophy?"

"Yes."

"Have you got a revolver, at least?"

"I've got my foot upon that Polish hound, and if he snarls, I'll crush him. But, take my word for it, he'll not

snarl, never fear. All he wants is compensation for his daughter's loss. It's not the first time I have settled an affair of the kind," he added, with a sneer. Yet he felt within him something that moved him strangely. It was not dread—that had always been an unmeaning word to him. It was rather a vague and wearisome sense of craving.

He looked up at the leaden sky, and down at the dead, gloomy rows of house-lined gullies, like trenches; and he lent an ear to the odd disquieting stillness of the sleeping town.

But once within the precincts of his own establishment, all the machinery of which was roaring loud; once in his own yard, with the familiar electric light, he felt at ease again.

"Just wait here a bit: I shall talk to him and be back in a minute."

He entered the great turret. Within, it was almost in absolute darkness. Only one single oil-lamp, hung up against the sooty wall, cast a faint light on the pistons as they worked to and fro, and on the under part of the big driving-wheel, as usual revolving with fearful speed, howling its savage hymn to force, and glittering ominously, with huge spokes of steel flying round.

"Malinovski!" he cried from the doorway; but the machinery, shouting as with iron jaws, drowned his voice in its terrific din.

Malinovski, bending forward, in a long blouse and holding in one hand an oil-can and in the other a cleaning-rag, was in attendance on the machine, watching over the monster. Swallowed up as he was in the chaos of discordant sounds and noises, he could only follow the huge thing's movements with his eyes, while it whirled and whirled as in mad, drunken fury, and shook the solid walls with its terrific strength.

"Malinovski!" Kessler screamed again, this time close to his ear.

He heard and came near, laying down his lamp and oil-can, and, looking calmly into Kessler's face, he wiped his hands upon his blouse.

"Did you write to me?" Kessler demanded fiercely.

The reply was a nod.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped, made furious by the old man's calm.

"What have you done to Sophy?" he said, stooping forward.

"Ha! so it's that?—Good; how much am I to pay?" he asked, instinctively backing towards the door.

"Nothing; it's I who'll pay you!" Malinovski answered composedly, blocking the way.

A steely flash shot from his eyes; his sinewy hands, powerful as the pistons of an engine, were clenched hard and threateningly.

"Out of my way, or I smash your skull!"

"If you can—if you can!" Malinovski muttered darkly.

Both moved forward, glaring and crouching, like tigers making ready to spring; their eyes sparkled like the steel-blue scintillations thrown off by the huge wheel—the monster's bright fangs, as it were, bared amid the shadows. The enormous wheel, like some reptile caught in a net of shadows mingled with darting lights, was howling wildly all the time, writhing and struggling as if to free itself from the prison of those thick-ribbed though quivering walls.

"Out of my way!" Kessler shrieked, as he dealt Malinovski such a blow from the heavy knuckle-duster arming his fist that the veteran staggered back to the wall. Instead of collapsing, however, he rebounded from it headlong and flew straight at Kessler, seized him by the throat in a grip of iron, and hurled him against the opposite wall with the same impact.

"Thou carrion, thou!" he bellowed, straining at Kessler's throat with all his strength, till Kessler vomited blood, and spluttered brokenly:

"Let go—let go——"

"When I've finished you off!—You are mine—mine—mine!" he whispered slowly, but heedlessly relaxing his grasp as he spoke, and thus giving Kessler a moment of respite.

Coming to himself, he darted forwards with a frantic,

desperate onset, and they both fell together. But Malinovski would not let go. Each held to the other; they hugged like two bears fighting for the mastery; they both rolled over and over with stifled cries of rage; their heads were beaten upon the asphalt floor, their bodies bruised against the walls around; one man's knees were thrust deep into the other's flesh, and they bit each other's faces and arms, screaming with pain and fury.

Both of them maddened by mutual hatred, both of them craving for the other's life-blood, they rolled together in dreadful union—a couple that fell down, rose up, fell again, and writhed about, tugging, straining, shrieking, covered with blood, demented with rage, whirling to and fro in mortal conflict beside the machine, with its deafening roar, and close to that huge wheel, all but seizing them every now and then in its annihilating grasp.

The struggle was short; Malinovski got the upper hand, and hugged his enemy with such resistless strength that his ribs and breastbone gave way. But Kessler, in a final effort, seized the other's throat between his teeth.

They rose together from the floor, staggered round and round each other, and, uttering a horrible cry, stumbled on to the pistons at work, and at once fell between the driving-wheel spokes, which revolved with the speed of lightning. In an instant they were seized, crumpled up, hurled to the ceiling, and crushed into strips and rags of bleeding flesh.

Their death-shriek was still resounding within the turret walls when they were no more; all that remained of them was the torn fragments of their limbs, that still went round with the wheel, describing a horrible orbit, or flew off against the walls, or fell on the pistons, befouling them with gore; while the huge wheel, crimsoned all over, and portentous in its awful strength, ran on as madly as ever, screaming as if possessed by some demon.

Few people followed Malinovski's funeral: only some near acquaintances and relatives of his son Adam. It was indeed fearful weather that day; flaws of rain and sleet again and

again swept the town, and most piercing blasts blew from the dark-grey clouds, floating heavily above the ground.

Adam followed the coffin with his mother, almost beside herself, her face swollen with crying. Behind them walked the Yaskulskis, with their elder children, and some of the neighbours and relatives. They went down the middle of the street, behind a one-horse carriage bearing the coffin, whose wheels, splashing in the ruts, sent thin black mud flying about in streams.

The train crept slowly down Piotrovska Street, crowded with wagons and private conveyances. Bespattered foot-passengers thronged the side-walks, jets of water spouted from the roofs, pouring over the pavements and the umbrellas, tossed to and fro by the wind; and the falling sleet went on whitening both the coffin and the carriage that bore it.

At the side of the street, and accompanying the coffin, walked the whole band of musicians, with Blumenfeld and Shulc at their head. Among them, but in the last ranks, was Stanley Vilchek, walking and talking about his business enterprises to some young fellow or other.

Horn stepped slowly along behind the mourners, glancing at everybody with eyes full of sorrow. It was Sophy whom he hoped to see. But she was not present, and no one knew what had become of her since Kessler's death.

When they got out of town, about twenty workwomen joined them, and struck up a wailing dirge, which they chanted quite by themselves, for not a single priest was there. Malinovski, as one reputed guilty both of murder and of suicide, was to be buried thus in token of abhorrence of his end. Perhaps that was why such dark and bitter faces were to be seen there.

But as they went on farther out of town, there flocked to the funeral a large number of men from the alleys and slums thereabout. They came, still unbreathed from their labours, begrimed, blue with cold, and massed themselves in a serried band around their departed companion. And a formidable host they looked.

The wailing chant resounded, the wind and rain came down, the frost was penetrating and pitiless. Along the avenue that led to the cemetery, the naked trees moaned, tossing in the blast, and the voices of those that chanted rose like sobs, telling of boundless sorrow. Through the cemetery, with its rotting leaves and drifting snow, its splendid family-vaults and bare trees rustling dismally, the mourners passed at a quick pace, and turned off to the "Corner of the Forgotten Ones," where hardly a score of graves were to be seen, overgrown with withered thistles and torchweeds.

The grave had been dug, and in a moment the yellow clods of frozen earth were rattling upon the coffin. A tempest of weeping and of lamentations followed, accompanied by the prayers which the workmen said in a loud voice, kneeling round the tomb.

On a sudden the wind ceased, the trees were hushed, the sky grew very dark, and big snow-flakes came down from the lowering clouds, settling like ponderous white butterflies, throwing a bright mantle over graves and men, and covering all with one great chilly sheet. Through the falling snow, they could hear afar the sirens in Lodz announcing the workmen's afternoon recess.

"What will become of Sophy?" Blumenfeld inquired of Vilchek as they were returning.

"She'll take to the street. When she heard about Kessler, she flew into a violent passion, and reviled her father, who had forced her to seek another protector. But Wilhelm Müller, I think, will take his place in no time."

"And what are you doing now, Vilchek?" Horn asked, joining the two.

"I am on the look-out for another stroke of business. I've done with Grosglik, and don't care to deal in coal any more."

"I suppose you have sold your building-plot to Grünspan?"

"I have!" he growled, and set his teeth, as though wincing at some painful experience.

"Ah, has he swindled you?"

"That he has!" he hissed through his clenched teeth, with an odd mingling of satisfaction and annoyance. "I sold it him for forty thousand, and gained thirty-eight thousand five hundred by the transaction; but I've been swindled all the same.—Never, never will I forgive him!"

He pulled up the collar of his fur coat, as if to hide the shame that crimsoned his face, as well as to protect it from the driving snow, which now came down more heavily.

"I don't quite make you out. If you have made so enormous a profit, how can you have been swindled?"

"Like this. You see, when the contract was signed, and the money already in my pocket, that scurvy whelp put out his hand to thank me for my great kindness! I was a very shrewd fellow, he said, but only so far as forty thousand roubles went! Then he laughed, and said he would have given fifty thousand, for the land was necessary to him—absolutely.—Think of it: I have been trapped like a dolt, and now they are all laughing at me."

It was not so much the money he cared for as the fact that Grünspan had taken him in and was now jeering at him. This was a sore blow to his vanity, and the thought gave him grinding torments. He quitted his companions abruptly, not being then in a mood to speak with anyone, and, taking a droshky, drove home.

This was still the same tumble-down hovel, which he had rented till the next spring. It was cold, damp, and desolate; so he only stayed there till night fell. He then walked over to the Colony, where he now boarded, being anxious to get into what he called "society."

But that day—as very rare exception—the company were in a far from lively mood. Kama in particular would burst into tears every now and then, and go and shut herself up in the parlour; the sight of Adam Malinovski cut her to the heart. Having taken his mother home and left her in the care of some near relations, he had wandered aimlessly about Lodz for some time. At last, when quite worn out, he had drifted to the Colony to take tea there as usual, hoping

to feel more at his ease in the midst of friends who understood him well. With a far-off look in his sea-green eyes, he was now sitting at the table, but those eyes seemed somehow darkened by the mental vision of his father's last instant, stamped and branded in his brain. He said nothing, but feeling that so many a friendly heart was full of compassion for him there, that so many eyes were directed towards him with the deepest sympathy, and noticing the subdued tones in which they spoke, the unusual demeanour of them all, and Kama's frequent bursts of sobbing and exits, he soon felt it was too much for him. He rushed out without leave-taking, and, once in the corridor, broke down in a tempest of weeping.

Horn and Vilchek followed, calmed him as best they could, and accompanied him to his home, where he found a good many friends assembled.

For a considerable time they sat with him in dead silence. At length Blumenfeld began to play one of Chopin's Nocturnes, very, very softly. He played a long time, and with such deep expression that Adam listened, and by degrees grew somewhat calmer.

Later, David Halpern too dropped in, and did all he could to console him, speaking with the liveliest faith of the justice and the goodness of God. Everyone was willing enough to listen, with the exception of Vilchek. As for him, he took no interest whatever in that sort of thing, possessed as he had been for the last fortnight with devouring hatred for Grünspan.

He would prowl about Lodz for days together, absorbed in the search for ways and means to injure his enemy. He had sworn to be revenged on him, and was only awaiting an opportunity for his revenge. Personal vengeance was not what he hankered after. To cudgel, even to kill Grünspan was nonsensical. It was Grünspan's purse that he would aim at. For many a day, and with the most careful investigation, he had been looking into all the particulars of the fire at Grosman's, convinced that he would thereby manage to strike at Grünspan's most vital interests.

He was in a fair way to discover everything; but meanwhile, as a foretaste of vengeance, he made up his mind to let Boroviecki know all about Grosglik's conspiracy against him, and Moritz's machinations to get the management of the factory into his own hands.

One day therefore, having dressed himself up with extreme elegance, he called upon old Mr. Adam and Anne, expecting to meet Charles there as well. Anne received him very kindly—he reminded her of old days in Kurov!—and took him in to see Mr. Adam.

"Why, Stanley! How are you getting on, my boy? I'm glad you've come, very glad," and the old man held out his hand, which Vilchek kissed mechanically—a survival from days long past. As he proceeded to tell them about Kurov, where he had lately been, Anne came near and listened attentively.

"Well, and how is the world treating you, eh?" the old man asked after a time.

"Oh, pretty well. Pretty well for a beginning," he answered carelessly, and said a few words about his forty thousand roubles, thinking to impress them exceedingly.

"Well, well, God's blessing upon you, my lad. May you become a millionaire some day, provided you never wrong your neighbour!"

Vilchek's lips curled in a pitying smile, and he set to explain his plans and intentions at great length, throwing thousands of roubles right and left, telling of his dislike for the millionaires he had dealings with, sketching his future in bold strokes, and at the same time making himself very ridiculous by his continual boasts.

Anne looked amused, and old Mr. Boroviecki exclaimed with surprise: "How curiously things go for us all in this world of ours! Do you remember, Stanley, my boy, how you used to drive my calves to the meadows? And Father Simon's hard cudgel—his long pipe-stem? Do you remember it?"

"It's hard enough to forget," Stanley replied, colouring up, for Anne had her eye curiously fixed upon him.

"Tell me, now, about that old Jewess. Did you or didn't

you eat up her sabbath cakes?" the old man went on mercilessly, his reminiscences waking up.

But Vilchek was so much annoyed by them that he made no reply, finished his tea, and walked off, furious with old Mr. Adam and with all the world.

"Shall my days of childhood always be a rope round my neck?" he snarled as he went away.

Mr. Adam spoke to Anne about him for a long time. He could not make out how things were going on in these days. How such a fellow as Vilchek, for instance, who once had tended their cattle, and whom he himself had often thrashed soundly, was now a man of wealth and came to visit them and behave as their equal. In spite of his democratic ideas the old gentleman found this beyond his comprehension. Or, rather, such a notion of equality was by no means to his liking, for he wound up by saying to Anne: "These people are going on too fast. The Lord was satisfied when the nobles were predominant. With these new men coming to the front, I fancy no one can be pleased but the Devil. What do you think, dear?"

CHAPTER XIX

BOROVIECKI was in Berlin. He had gone to visit Lucy, who had sent him telegrams without number, threatening to take her life unless he came for some hours at least. He had been rather pleased to go, expecting to get a few days' rest away from the factory, now in full swing. Indeed, he was excessively fatigued, and quite worn out with work and worry.

Lucy he saw twice a day. Each meeting was a torment to him, especially as she had by now lost all her good looks; and her altered figure and swollen face inspired him with profound dislike, almost with loathing.

She, on her side, was not slow to perceive the impression she now made, and every appointment ended on her part in tears and bitter reproaches.

Each of them was, in fact, a torture to the other. She was as much attached to him as ever, but now she was no more the exquisitely passionate lover that she had once been, that Lucy, full of unconscious delicacy, unaffected artlessness, and touching simplicity, Lucy the beautiful, the pride of Lodz; in her place had sprung up a common, vulgar, ill-bred Jewess, of the type met with in little country towns, noisy, insolent, shallow-brained. Her coming motherhood had deformed her and brought out all the worst peculiarities of her race.

This change in her dismayed him; but knowing what wrong he had done her, he tried his best to conceal the dislike and antipathy she aroused, and bore quietly enough with her whims and outbursts of temper. At every meeting she would upbraid him, taking delight in torturing both herself and him; declaring that the child about to be born was his, tormenting him with her continual fears of approaching

death—and ending by flinging herself into his arms with the fiercest transports of gross sensuality.

It was not long before he left her completely, his self-control and patience being near the breaking-point. But he did not leave Berlin so soon. He stayed on to take a little rest at last, spending his days and nights in empty, senseless amusements.

After coming back one morning early, he was awakened late in the afternoon by a messenger from the telegraph office. Opening his eyes, heavy and dull with sleep, he saw the words:

"Come back—factory on fire—Moritz."

Leaping from his bed, he dressed in the twinkling of an eye, set to drinking his tea, which had long grown cold, and looked, as in a daze, out of the window at the houses opposite. Some time passed before he noticed that a crumpled paper was clenched in his hand. He straightened it out and read the words once more.

"The factory on fire!" he cried in amazement and terror, and rushed into the corridor as if to give the alarm. He had got as far as the lift before he recovered his senses and his self-control.

He ordered a special train, and till it was ready, waited in a small restaurant close to the station, with thoughts of terror flashing through his mind. What he drank or did or said just then, he never knew; his whole being was away at his burning factory.

He was told the train was waiting. He understood, for he went to board it. But when asked a question, he also understood, but could make no answer; the one thought—that his factory was on fire—excluded every other.

The train, consisting only of the engine, its tender, and one carriage, rushed at once out of the station, like a thorough-bred touched with the spur, and went off steaming at full speed into the snow-covered plain. Stations, towns, hills, rivers, forests, flashed past with kaleidoscopic swiftness, made visible like shadows, and like shadows fading into the night.

At a station where they had to stop, he wired to Moritz, asking for news of the fire to be sent on to him. Off they went again. There were, so to speak, no halts. The train, like some wild beast, dashed ever forward, with blood-red eyes, devouring space and vomiting millions of golden sparks; with its pistons beating time in a mighty rhythm, and its wheels speeding over the rails as they thundered their roaring song, it ploughed its way through the darkness, sweeping on—on—on.

Boroviecki stood looking into the night, his face against the window-pane: saw the blurred, trembling outlines of things flitting by; saw the snowy plain receding rapidly. It was now late at night. He shaded the lamp and laid himself down. But there was no sleep for him. Ever and anon his brain was swept by tempests of fear—scattered fragments of pictures, all the more frightful because he could in no way seize their outlines, nor hold their transient forms in his mind; each vanished instantly, and, vanishing, left his mind in prey to the direst horror.

Once he started to his feet, uncovered the lamp, and, exerting his will-power to the utmost, began to draw up in his note-book an account of all his assets and liabilities. But he could not go on, so terrified he felt at the very thought of learning the true state of his affairs. The insurance money could, he was sure, do no more than cover his own debts, his partners' shares, and Anne's contribution. But the capital he had sunk in the concern, and the money value of his work done, and the promises for work in the future—they would be nowhere.

He wanted not to think of all this, but the more he tried, the less he succeeded. Those figures, of evil significance, were fixed too deep in his brain, and came out too clearly on his retina. "What's to be done?" he thought, but only at times; connected thinking was at present beyond him. He could not spin the fibres of his thoughts into a thread; they fell asunder, scattered and broken by his delirious impatience.

Again he looked out into the night, cursing the train for travelling so slowly. His feverish imagination had flown on

a hundred times faster: he was already in Lodz, seeing the far-off glow and then the flames, and all the work he had done perishing in them, and hearing the thunderous crash of the falling walls. The fire in Lodz was devouring his very soul.

Then he would start to his feet, pace up and down the carriage, hurtle against the partitions, and—a sense as of intoxication coming over him—lie down again and stare at the lamp till he felt himself as one with the train—with the rumbling wheels, with the engine's pantings, its labourings and strivings; and he took a furious delight in rushing thus headlong through the night and the empty snow-covered fields.

But oh! how slowly, how very slowly the hours crept by! He pulled the window down and put his head out into the frosty night air. There was a keen, bleak wind blowing over the snowy fields and into his burning face; and the dark expanse, feebly lit up by the bright patches of snow, filled his mind with the dreariest gloom and dejection.

Meanwhile the train rushed on like a roaring thunderbolt. Slumbering stations, snow-covered hamlets, forests bending beneath their snowy burdens, long lines of railway lights—bright bubbles floating in a sea of darkness—all was travelling backward with impetuous speed, as if fleeing in terror from the giant's charge.

Charles felt himself more than unwell, and so broken down that he could hardly stand; sore at heart, sore in every muscle, each thought that passed through his brain burning like a prod with a red-hot knife. Still he tramped on stubbornly from window to window, sat down on one seat after another; then, starting up with a jerk, went again to look out into the frosty winter night and the dark impenetrable space before him. As station after station flew past, he glanced at them with a throbbing heart to make sure of the names he was expecting, but could barely distinguish in the gloom. The suspense which tortured him never ceased from driving its keen dart into every nerve, every centre of thought, racking him with unspeakable agony.

Wearied out at last, he fell into a sort of drowse, from which he would start up, his brow bathed in the sweat of fear, and his heart sick with the sense of his utter helplessness. Fatigue mastered him; he no longer knew clearly where he was, nor what had come to pass. As in a dream, he watched the coming of the pale wintry dawn, with its wan grey face looking in at the window, slumberously crawling over the snows, sweeping the darkness from the fields, mingling with the lights of the awaking villages, unveiling the outlines of the forests, wrapping itself up in the folds of the dusky clouds rapidly moving forward from the east, and then hiding itself in an enormous grey cloak and shaking the snow down from it in great flakes that obscured all the landscape.

Struggling to get over his exhaustion, he washed, and then made a desperate attempt to get his unstrung nerves under full control. To a certain extent he succeeded, at least in so far as external appearances went. He forced himself to be outwardly calm, and to think connectedly, but was unable to overcome his restlessness and impatience, which increased as the train drew near Lodz.

He looked back at the past with the bitterest disappointment. So many years of hard work, such high hopes, such strenuous efforts, such intense yearnings for success—all these he saw flying away in clouds of smoke! His anguish was all the greater because he could do nothing whatever, and because of his futile revolt against destiny, his most malignant foe.

The snow was coming down still thicker than before, and though it was now broad day, nothing of the outside world was to be seen. The train thundered on at the very top of its speed, tearing and rending, as it were, the white shroud drifting over the land. Boroviecki, leaning out of the window, and drawing breaths of frozen air into his parched mouth, was presently able to discern the outlines of many a factory through the curtain of snow; and this flooded him with such raging impatience that he bit his fingers hard, to repress the scream that was rising to his lips.

The engine, as if it shared his feelings, went forward, seem-

ingly driven by a madman; with fierce concentrated energy, with snorting and shrieking, with pistons screaming aloud, it flew like a huge droning beetle over the whitening plains, as if it would fly on for ever.

CHAPTER XX

ON the evening before that very day, Anne was sitting as usual with old Mr. Boroviecki, who was more nervous and weary than usual, always asking about Charles, and complaining of want of breath and of a sharp pain at his heart. The day had been sombre, and snow had fallen more than once; but it ceased before eventide, though the gale increased then and whistled about the veranda, on which the sick man's windows opened. It abated, however, when twilight came, and there followed a deep stillness, in which the sounds of the factory were plainly audible.

"When is Charles coming back?" he whispered faintly.

"I cannot tell," was her reply, as she paced the room and looked out of the window.

She had a sensation of extraordinary lassitude, together with tedium and depression, that had come to her when that grim leaden night cast its shadows over Lodz. For weeks she had not been from home, always tending the sick man, and restlessly looking forward to some way or other out of all her troubles.

Just then, whilst walking about the room, now in shadow, and always impregnated with the odour of some drug for the old man, the thought came to her that she was doomed to drag out her existence thus without end, and to remain everlastingly in the same state of suspense. She did not rebel against what had to be, she submitted to her fate without reserve; but in her soul she felt that sadness, the deepest of all, the sadness of resignation.

Old Mr. Adam had begun to say his evening prayers, but she did not join him to say them, for her mind was away.

A feeling of torpor had taken possession of her, whilst gazing into the garden at the falling snow and the factory walls beyond.

From the garden gate, opening on the factory yard, a man came running as fast as he could, and entered the veranda shouting. Anne went out to meet him. It was Soha, and he uttered one word—one only: "Fire!"

"Where?" She closed the door for the old man not to hear.

"At the factory. It broke out in the drying-room, on the third floor."

She questioned him no further, but ran out to the factory on the spur of the moment. From the wicket-gate she could see the flames putting forth their crimson heads out of the third-floor windows. In the yard there was a tumult not to be described. Men were pouring out of the pavilions, uttering loud cries; window-panes were breaking, and clouds of pungent black smoke came out of them, with fiery tongues that licked the window-frames and climbed up toward the roofs.

"Father!" she cried, remembering him with a thrill of terror, and ran back to the house.

"What is it, Anne?" the old man said in alarm.

"Nothing, nothing.—There seems to have been an accident at Travinski's mills," she answered hastily, as she lit the lamps herself, and let down the blinds with hands that trembled.

"Miss Anne—for God's sake—mercy on us!" the maid-servant screamed, rushing in.

"Be silent!" Anne commanded. "Light the lamp, it's too dark here."

"But—but the lamp is lit already!"

"So it is. Very good. Now go; I'll call you presently."

The dull, confused sounds of the conflagration were now rising louder and louder, and to such an extent that they could be heard through closed windows and doors.

"What shall I do, what shall I do?" Anne exclaimed, utterly lost. How could she find means for the noise not to reach the old man's ears?

"Anne, ask Max in to tea with us."

"All right. I am writing to him this instant."

She hurried to the writing-desk, moved some chairs noisily, slammed several drawers, knocked over a vase first, and then a heavy box full of papers, and in picking them up again managed to overset some chairs. Then she shut the door with a bang.

"What's the matter with you to-night, Anne?" the sick man grumbled, listening attentively, and not without apprehension; for though slightly deaf, he could hear a strange clamour that reached his room.

"I am so clumsy, so dreadfully clumsy—even Charles has told me I am," she said in excuse, and burst out into a long peal of meaningless laughter.

She passed into the next room to take a look at the factory. But she could not repress a shriek at what she saw: a great wave of fire, towering high above the factory roof, and still rising higher and more terrible.

"What's that, Anne?" the old man cried, on hearing her shriek.

"Nothing, Father, nothing. I only hit my head against the door," she rejoined, with both hands to her head so as to conceal her confusion, and gain time to repress her dismay. She was still shuddering from the sight, and felt so weak that she could not stand.

The fire-brigade, with twanging trumpet-calls, passed at full gallop down the street.

"And that, Anne, what may it be?"

"Oh," she replied, "only some carts driven faster than usual."

"But there was music, I thought."

"No; merely sleigh-bells tinkling past." She turned the talk by adding: "Shall I read to you a little, Father?"

He nodded assent.

By a more than human effort she silenced the tempest within herself, and began to read in a very loud voice.

"I can hear you, Anne, I can!" the old man remarked pettishly.

To this she paid no heed, but went on as before.

What it was she read, Anne did not know, nor could she make out a single line, a single word; her fevered brain made up sentences; her whole mind was tossed in the storm of clamours, resounding crashes, and reverberations from the burning pile. The blood-red light shed by the fire was now visible upon the blinds, in spite of the lamp in the room. And still she went on reading, though she sometimes came to a momentary standstill, as an unspeakable dread took possession of her mind. A clammy sweat, caused by her strivings, covered her wan face, now changed into a mask of terror. The wild look in her eyes was hidden under her knitted brows. At times her voice would change and break; there was a pain at her heart so crushing, so suffocating, that she was almost mad with it. Yet she still kept herself in hand.

And now the noises outside reached the room more distinctly; the thunder of ceilings falling, the rattle of crumbling walls, shook the house every now and then.

"Have mercy, O Lord! Say Thou: 'Peace, be still!'" she prayed silently, invoking that Name, and beseeching Him with all her heart to take pity on them.

The old man no longer listened to her reading, but to the din outside. He began to be afraid, with increasing fear.

"I hear shrieks—in Charles's factory most likely!—Anne! see what it is."

She went, and saw what it was. Entering the other room, she beheld the whole factory one sheet of flame, and the huge conflagration spreading tempestuously to all the pavilions, with pillars of fire uprising to the sky.

"Nothing, Father, nothing! Only the wind shrieking. It blows very hard—quite a hurricane." But it was only with a tremendous endeavour that she was able to say the words.

She could not breathe. Despair, impotency, fright, were all clutching at her throat. She knew well that the fire must end the old man's life.

"And what can I do?—Why is Charles away?—And what if our house takes fire too?" The thought shot like lightning through her brain, hypnotized her with terror, paralysed her

completely. She could not, no, she could not read any more.

Walking to and fro in the room, and stumbling now and then, she brought the samovar-stand and put it in its place.

"It's the wind.—Father, do you recollect the great gale we had once in Kurov? Our poplar avenue was all ruined by that storm.—Dear, how frightened I was then! It was just like now—the same horrible whistling; the same crashing and groaning of the trees as they fell—and the horrible howling of the storm—— Good God, how terrible it was—and is!"

She said no more, the words died away on her lips; she stood for an instant motionless, half dead with fear, as she listened to the mighty, roaring flames.

"Out there something is wrong," the sick man said, making an attempt to raise himself up.

At once she came to herself, assured him that all was well, and went into the parlour. There, putting forth all her strength to the utmost, she pushed the piano over to the open door, and set to playing a wild, furious gallopade. The merry notes, full of mad gaiety, filled the dwelling; the measures were struck off with such power, such brilliancy, such peals of laughter and vertiginous fantasy, that they succeeded in drowning the noise of the conflagration, and brought old Boroviecki, not only to his former tranquillity, but to something like gaiety as well.

She continued to play, with still greater fury. A string would snap now and then with a dolorous twang, but she paid no heed. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, yet she did not know she was weeping. She knew nothing, understood nothing, but played on recklessly to save Father's life.

On a sudden, the whole house shook with a most violent explosion, as if half the world had been blown to pieces; the pictures fell down from the walls. Mr. Adam started up, rushed to the window, pulled up the blind—and the glare of the conflagration burst in upon him and filled the room.

"The factory! Charles, O Charles!" he cried, and fell on his back upon the floor, catching at his throat with a spas-

modic quiver; his legs twitched convulsively, his stiffening fingers tore at the blanket which was round him, and he uttered a strangled gurgle.

Anne ran to help him, called for the servants, rang for them. No one was in. She tried to bring him to, but in vain; he gave no sign of life. She rushed frantically from the house, crying out for aid.

Some people came presently, along with Dr. Vysocki, who had come to give first aid to the injured workmen; but it was too late; the old man had passed away, and Anne lay beside him, senseless on the floor.

The detonation which had killed him by revealing the fact that the factory was on fire had been caused by the explosion of a boiler, which flew high in the air, carrying with it part of a pavilion. Describing a long parabola, it came down like a burning meteor on the front pavilion of old Baum's factory. Crashing through the roof and the second and first floors, it fell upon the ground-floor, littered with fragments of the building, which now also began to take fire.

After the boiler had exploded, the fire at Boroviecki's made yet more terrible progress. Through the aperture made in the walls, as through a deep wound, torrents of fire and smoke issued forth, seizing everything with tempestuous fury in their hot embrace.

The fire-brigade did its very utmost. Nevertheless, and in spite of all, one pavilion after another took fire; like a thing endowed with life, the flame crept up the walls, climbed to the roofs, and darted its blood-red streaks across the yard, till it formed one great torrent that rolled all over the factory in mighty, fiery waves.

The terror of this spectacle was enhanced by the thick blackness of the night and the violence of the gale, which fanned the flames and blew them in every direction in dishevelled filaments of fire. Each time a roof fell in, there uprose red columns of glowing dust, and a dazzling rain of fire came pouring down from on high in the murky night over the neighbouring roofs. The yard was filled with volumes of acrid smoke, that hid the walls like a coal-black

fog, in which there were dimly seen fiery serpents, hissing and writhing, monstrous red shapes pursuing one another, and weird heads of flame with flying, portentous hair.

Storey after storey gave way; their contents, burning furiously, fell into the sea of fire; wall after wall burst asunder, crumbling to heaps of ruins. The fire was now master there; for the men had withdrawn, in order to protect Travinski's works hard by, and to put out the fire which had sprung up in Baum's factory.

Moritz, husky with shouting, and all in perspiration, was still running feverishly hither and thither; but in that hubbub of savage cries no one could hear him. And, in the close yard, from which the remains of the scaffolding had not yet been removed, the heat was unbearable.

The fire was on every side, loud-sounding as a sea in in a storm. At times there would come a lull, and then again it would raise its awful head, shaking it with a howl as of hideous joy; while burning stuffs, masses of yarn on fire, and torn rags of flaming tissues would fly up from the depths and hover in the air like noisy birds of ill omen.

Such was the violence of the conflagration that the men stood staring at it in complete bewilderment; helpless, dazed. They shrank away from it, and were terrified exceedingly; but the cries of horror which burst from every mouth were inaudible in the chaotic din of sounds and crashes, the dreary clanking of machines hurtling down, together with the chambers that contained them, and the noise of walls that fell; all these forming a chorus to the Corybantic minstrelsy of the fire itself. The conflagration shouted its triumphant anthem, waving its red banners in the pitch-black Cimmerian darkness; it rolled in frenzy all over the ruined buildings, and yelled and shrieked, and danced, and bit at the walls with gory fangs, tearing the machinery to pieces, licking up the molten iron, consuming everything, destroying everything, and trampling over the ruins it had made.

Towards day-break, when the snow began to fall very heavily, the fire had burnt itself out. Only the bare walls remained standing, roofless, floorless, windowless—a naked

skeleton with charred and crumbling hones: a huge four-square building, like a chest pierced with many a hole, and emitting smoke at every aperture, within which some remnants of the fire were still crawling about like devil-fishes whose blood-red tentacles sucked at the dead body of the factory.

The morning was grey and dismal, with snow falling in thick flakes, when Boroviecki arrived. Jumping out of his cab, he rushed straight into the yard. Standing there amongst the heaps of wreckage and the smoking timbers, on which jets of water were playing, he slowly took in the whole extent of the disaster: the piles of half-consumed rubbish, and the rent walls, as crumbly as burnt rags, now become the graveyard of all his labours and hopes. All this he eyed with a long and tranquil gaze.

Not a muscle quivered, not a nerve thrilled. All the excitement and uncertainty and apprehension that had preyed so upon him during the journey had vanished in presence of the reality before him; and he looked this reality straight in the face, growing to outward appearance sterner and colder as he gazed, while within him his heart swelled with animosity, resentment, and implacable revolt.

Moritz came to him, along with a good many others. He met them all with frigid unconcern, and heard what they had to say about the cause and the spread of the fire. He asked no questions, but passed into his office, which had been saved from the conflagration, as well as the storehouses for finished wares, though these were as good as empty.

Old Yaskulski, who had been injured in the fire, lay there moaning, with Vysocki in attendance on him.

Through the broken office window Charles once more surveyed the smoking ruins. Then he said to Moritz, in a subdued yet firm voice: "Well, what of this? We have to begin all over again."

"Yes, oh yes!—Ah, if you only knew what I have gone through! I am quite knocked up, and fear for my health. Do you know, I was in town and saw the fire-brigade passing by. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'let them take their time; why

hurry so?' Then someone said: 'It's at Boroviecki's!'—Off I drove, but when I got here, all the spinning department was on fire. Ah, what I have gone through, what I have gone through!"

He went on lamenting loudly, shamming despair and extreme affliction, but all the while keenly scanning the expression on Boroviecki's face.

The latter heard him talk until, tired with his ceaseless repetitions of the same refrain, he bent forward and whispered in his ear, very softly: "No humbug! This is all your work."

Moritz started back violently and cried: "Are you mad? Are you quite out of your mind?"

"I have spoken."

And he turned away to Matthew, who, all begrimed and in tears, was stammering something that Charles could not make out. He only understood that somebody had died.

"But who is it you are talking of? Don't mumble so," Charles exclaimed, losing patience.

"Our old master! Dear Lord!—I ran in, found master dead, and Miss Anne lying on the ground."

"Look here, you idiot! No foolery, or I'll smash your skull in!" Charles shouted, rushing at him.

Here Vysocki interfered. "Mr. Adam has died of aneurysm of the heart, probably occasioned by sudden fright. My dear fellow, you had better go and see Miss Anne; she too is half dead."

Thunderstruck to hear this, Boroviecki, whose affection for his father was extreme, ran out of the room as if he doubted the truth of Vysocki's statement. On the threshold of the door he met Anne, whom they were taking to the Travinskis'.

"Charles! Charles!" she gasped, seizing his hand; and a torrent of tears streamed down her hollow cheeks.

"Hush, do not cry. I shall rebuild the factory, and all will be right again."

"But Father—Father——" She could say no more, and fell into a fit of convulsive weeping.

"I shall come and see you in the afternoon," he said hastily, making a sign for the men to carry her away; that reminder of his father had clutched his heart with an iron grip.

He entered the room where the body lay, and stood there long, his eyes fixed on those features, so loving, so dignified —but now so changed! They had frozen into a look of unspeakable agony—the unuttered cry of the soul, which had distorted those traits so fearfully that Charles trembled with horror to see them.

Beside his father's corpse he now spent the most excruciating moments in all his life. He sat there for many an hour, plunged in depths of concentrated thought, unravelling the whole web of his past life, laying himself bare before himself, and contemplating his own naked soul. This contemplation indeed restored him to peace, to perfect peace; but at the same time it filled his heart with a sadness that remained with him ever after.

He lay down to sleep, and slept for a long, long time. When he awoke, his sober sense had got the upper hand. He resolved to return once again to the fight, and again to struggle with his fate.

At the very outset he met with an obstacle in his way. Moritz came and, with protestations of the most tender friendship, announced that he had to withdraw his share in the concern, together with all the moneys lent; and that he had already given notice at the insurance office to that effect.

"I quite understand," said Boroviecki; "you have done all you could to ruin me, and very cleverly it has been done! But do you think that you'll succeed? that I am down and done for?"

"You are out of your mind with grief, and do not know what grievous wrong you do me with your suspicions. If I withdraw, it's only because I cannot let my money lie locked up in a business that's dead. You can pull through without my help; and I have to live and do business with

my father-in-law, and am in sore need of money on the nail."

He then proceeded to speak in glowing language of the affairs which compelled him to take this step, defended himself with great warmth, and wound up by embracing him.

"Don't look at me so, Charles! I love you as a brother; I am most heartily grieved for your losses—so grieved that I should be glad to help you in any feasible way. And though I shall make nothing by this, I am ready to buy the ground where your factory stood, and all that is left of it. Oh, you know well what a tender heart mine is for all my friends! —You'd have ready cash—I could borrow it for you at once —and the wherewithal for a fresh start!"

On hearing this proposal Boroviecki indignantly threw the door wide open.

"This is my answer," he said. "All matters of business are to be transacted in my office."

"What! What!—This to me?—This for all my friendship, my devoted friendship?" Moritz shrieked.

"Out with you, or I'll have you turned out!" Charles cried, ringing for Matthew.

Moritz left, and Boroviecki sat down to balance his accounts, which took him a great deal of time. When he had done, he rose, white and very much shaken. The insurance money would go no further than to cover the biggest debts; and there were others, of less importance but in far greater numbers, which would completely swallow up all that his building-plot was worth, and so leave him absolutely destitute.

Once more he would have to accept a subordinate position, to serve a master, to become a mere wheel in some piece of industrial machinery, and to writhe for many a year in impotent desolation and barren dreams of independence; to lie in fetters and in prison, looking up through the gratings of his cell at the men who set up factories, start new movements, gather up millions, and live to the utmost extent of all their faculties and all their passions.

"No, no, no!" he muttered between his teeth, in dire revolt against such a future, which he looked at with scorn and contempt. He had already had enough of that sort of life, and would return to it at no price whatever. He set his wits to work strenuously to find a way out of the toils he was entangled in. Not for one instant did he dream of a possible surrender.

Max came to him the next day, very pale, with tear-swollen eyelids, and almost too worn out to stand. He at once told him simply that he too withdrew his share from the business, and had also notified the insurance-office people.

Boroviecki could bear no more. "So you too are deserting me, Max?" he said bitterly; and tears—the first tears he had ever shed—welled up to his eyes from the depths of a bleeding heart.

Suppressing these feelings, however, he proceeded to set before his friend the plan for a new factory, on which he enlarged, growing warmer by degrees, conquering all difficulties and making impossibilities possible. And for this second fight with destiny it was not Max's money that he wanted, but himself and his probity and efficiency. He entreated, he implored Max not to fall away from him.

"No, I can't do it. Don't be angry with me, don't take it ill; I simply cannot. You see, I put myself entirely into that factory, I loved it as my child, I lived with its life—and now it has vanished—all gone up in smoke! I should not have energy enough, no, nor faith enough, to do the same work over again. Do, pray, consider the state I am in, and forgive me. Farewell, Charles, I am ever your friend, and you can always count upon me; but from this day forth I must do things by myself. What I shall do I cannot tell as yet. So farewell, dear Charles!"

"Farewell, dear Max!"

And they parted, with sincere affection on either side. Boroviecki bore him no grudge, for Max's discouragement was plain enough to him; and besides, the workmen had related to him how, when the factory was found to be past

saving, he had locked himself up in his office and cried like a child over the ruin of his work.

"So, then, I am quite alone? Very well, then; very well." The words sounded like a challenge issued to the whole world.

He gave orders for his father's burial, but went himself to his wrecked factory, where the officials of the insurance company were already hard at work. Presently Matthew came to him with the announcement that Müller senior was at his house and waiting to see him.

As soon as they were together, the old manufacturer gave him a friendly hug, and said hurriedly: "I was in Sosnoviec —only got the news by wire to-day—that's the reason I'm late. Awfully sorry—the more so because I've seen how hard you worked.—And now what are you going to do?"

"Don't know yet."

"What!" Müller blurted out; "have you lost all?"

"Yes, all."

"That's no matter; I'll stand by you. You'll pay me at the usual rate of interest, and build a bigger factory than before! I'm fond of you; you're a man to my liking.—Well, what do you say?"

Charles steadily made objections to Müller's offer. He pointed out that there would be absolutely no security for the capital sunk, and depicted his present financial position in the darkest colours. But the other only laughed.

"Pooh, don't tell me! You have first-class brains—which are the very best capital in the world. What you've lost now, you'll get back again in a very few years. I was only a craftsman, a weaver, you know; I can't so much as write my name properly; yet now I've got a factory, and millions into the bargain. If you'll marry my girl Mada, you'll get the whole concern along with her; I have long wanted to tell you that. If not, I'll lend you the money all the same. My boy Will isn't cut out for a manufacturer; I shall have to buy him an estate; he wants to set up for a landowner. I need just such a man as you for a son-in-law.—Now, what

do you say to that?" he asked anxiously, talking very fast, and passing his sleeve over his fat, perspiring face, while he watched Charles anxiously. "Out with it at once, please; I have no time to wait."

"All right," Charles said coolly. He had long fancied it might come to that.

Müller embraced him, slapped him on the back, and strode away home, greatly delighted.

CHAPTER XXI

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed since the fire, and since old Mr. Boroviecki's funeral, at which Anne had not been able to be present, as she was then lying ill at the Travinskis', where she had gone to stay. She now felt much better, but not well enough to leave the house, for March had come round, bringing dreadfully cold and damp and muddy weather. Except for her nerves, which had been terribly shaken, she was almost well now.

That night of horror, with its climax—old Mr. Adam's sudden death—had made a deep and lasting impression upon her. There were days when she would sit ever so long staring into abysses out of which a dull murmur came floating to her ear—the noise of a great conflagration, with awful shrieks, flooding her with such terror that she swooned, or started up madly to escape from it.

Someone had to be in constant attendance on her, occupy her attention, and prevent it from concentrating on the past. Nina was with her most of the time, caring for her like a mother; Mrs. Vysocka also came daily, and Kama would spend whole evenings there.

Anne often remained all day long in the large corner-room, transformed into a sort of greenhouse, resounding with the twittering of birds, mingled with the murmur of a tiny fountain; and full, too, of flowers, for a goodly number of camellia bushes, covered with red and white blossoms, had been placed there.

She was sitting one day in a large, low arm-chair, when she said to Nina with deep emotion: "Do you know—never,

never in all my life have I been so tenderly cared for as now!"

"Because," Nina returned gaily, "you never were in need of such care. And if I take care of you, it's for my own sake. You are my model, and I must see to you." She was painting Anne's portrait, in her present half-recumbent attitude, her chair covered with a tiger's skin, and the blossoming camellias in the background.

It was so cosy, so quiet here! The fountain was playing, rising into the air in a spray of diamond fragments, falling in silvery dust on a snow-white basin of marble, with many a tiny water-lizard that basked in the sunbeams.

"Has Charles been here?" Nina inquired.

"He has."

"And have you——?"

"Not yet; my courage failed me. But one of these days I shall return his ring and set him free. It is so hard—so hard!"

She said no more, but something glistened in her eyes.

They did not again refer to the subject. Day after day went by monotonously and without change, except that one evening Stanley Vilchek came to call on her.

She received him in the "greenhouse" room, and sat for some time silent, watching him. Stanley Vilchek, who had dressed and scented himself with infinite care, informed her that he had entered into partnership with Max Baum, along with whom he was next spring going to found a great factory of half-wool shawls on the grounds belonging to Baum senior; and that they intended to enter into competition with Grünspan.

"And what," she asked, "has become of old Mr. Baum?"

"It's not easy to say of him anything but this: he has quite lost his wits. You know, madam, how the fire caused by that boiler's explosion wrecked his factory, which was already pretty nearly at a standstill. Well, the old man gave up all the land to Max, together with all his goods in warehouse; he even sold the looms that had been rescued from

the fire. Then he divided everything amongst his children, with the proviso that the factory building itself should remain untouched and in his sole possession as long as he lived. And he shut himself up there, and there he is living now. Quite, quite mad!—I counselled Max to have him taken —and by force, if needful—to a—a sanatorium; for the factory building would come in very handy for us. But Max will not have it."

"And quite right of him.—Will you kindly ask Mr. Max to come and call on me?"

"With pleasure. I know he has for a long time been intending to come, and was only waiting to know that you had completely recovered."

He stayed for a short while, doing his best to show off in her presence, and then took his leave. Anne bade him farewell with marked indifference. She had taken a strong dislike to the man, and on his departure hastened to wash her hand; she had felt his, so unpleasantly cold and damp!

"He reminds me of some reptile," she remarked to Nina.

"There's in him," said Travinski, "something of a reptile, something of a beast of prey. Such a man either gets to the very top of the tree, or ends his days prematurely—in jail." And he told Anne all about Vilchek's getting the better of Grünspan, and his peculiar ways of making money.

"How," she exclaimed indignantly, "can you allow him to enter your house, with all this against him?"

"He came to call upon you, madam, and I cannot help seeing him. In Lodz one cannot divide men into two classes, those who are and those who are not honest. One has to deal with both."

"But I do not want to see him any more."

"Very well. I shall tell the butler. But do not be shocked by what I just said. People do, not what they had rather do, but what they must."

He smiled regretfully, with a glance at Nina, who had taken her easel away and withdrawn, in order not to hear what he said; such statements were always more than un-

pleasant to her. She went round to the camellias, and was blowing upon the pink blossoms, which opened under her dainty breath.

"Life is a hard thing—too hard!" Anne faltered.

"It is not really. Only we are too hard upon life in what we ask of it. Our dreams of the beautiful are too hard to realize; so too are our aspirations towards ideal goodness and justice, which are never satisfied, and prevent us from taking life as we find it. And this is the source of all our sufferings."

"And of all our hopes!" Nina added, setting on a stand beside Anne a vase with a China rose-bush with marvellous yellow blossoms of most subtle fragrance. "Look at this, and don't talk of unpleasant things."

At evening Joe Yaskulski dropped in. For some time past he had come regularly to read to Anne. She was informed by him of several particulars respecting Charles and his affairs, for the latter, though he came to see her daily, never spoke a word about business.

"Is your father well now?" she asked.

"For a week he has been directing the men who remove the burnt wreckage from the place."

"And you, what are you doing?"

"I also am with Mr. Boroviecki—in his office, for Mr. Baum senior has now wound up his affairs." So said young Joe, now more bashful and more given to blush than ever. Poor fellow! he had fallen most ardently in love with Anne, to whom he every night wrote interminable love-letters, which he of course never delivered, but to which he would compose answers of not less amorous import. These he would read (in great secret, and without giving any names) either to his fellow clerks, or during the musical gatherings at Malinovski's.

"Mr. Max has asked me to inquire whether he may call on you to-morrow."

"Certainly he may; I shall expect him in the afternoon," she said, with no little eagerness.

She awaited Max with impatience. When he was an-

nounced, her heart fluttered with gladness; and it was with great emotion that she stretched her hand out to welcome him. Max, much taken aback and confused, sat down at some distance, and inquired about her health in a low and rather unsteady voice.

"I am quite well, and only expecting a spell of fair weather to get out of doors—and away from Lodz altogether."

"Shall you be away for long?" Max asked eagerly.

"Perhaps for ever. I cannot yet say what I am going to do."

"Are you unhappy in Lodz?"

"I feel miserable here. Father is dead, and——" Here she broke off.

Max made no attempt to fill the pause, and they both remained in silence, but looked at each other with mutual sympathy. Anne gave him a smile so frank and kindly that Max's heart melted like wax. His love for her, so long fought down, now rose again, filling him with such joy that he would gladly have kissed the chair she sat on. Yet he remained seated, stiff and gawky, and after a few more words of banal civility, rose to take his departure.

"What, so soon?" she complained.

"I must go, and that directly. I'm due at Miss Mela Grünspan's wedding with Moritz."

"Miss Mela—Moritz's wife!"

"A very well-matched pair. She has lots of money, a father who has made several successful bankruptcies, and a fiancé cunning enough to circumvent even his father-in-law."

"But you'll come and see me again?"

"Whenever you allow me."

"Every day, then, if you wish it, and can find time."

Max, delighted beyond measure, kissed her hand and went away.

Later, when the factory lights began to gleam through the windows in the evening, Boroviecki came in. Both he and Anne remained silent for many minutes; only their eyes would meet in the twilight for an instant and immediately

look away. Then, when the lamps were lit, they spoke in low voices, so as not to break in upon the music; for Nina was playing in the next room, with wonderfully gentle touches, on the piano, drawing forth sounds like the rippling and bubbling of a streamlet.

Anne was absently turning her engagement ring round and round her finger. Each had something to say; it was on the tip of their tongues, yet neither could say it. And meanwhile Nina played on and on—the sounds floating from the instrument were now a whisper of love, of passion, with rapid fiery outbursts; they awoke in both their hearts an echo of the forgotten past.

Anne's eyes brimmed with tears, her heart with unsufferable woe, and she almost mechanically took off her engagement ring and silently gave it back to him. He likewise, without a word, took off his own and returned it. Their eyes met in one long look.

Charles could not support that tearful gaze, it stabbed him too deep, it was like a brand burning into his very soul. He bent his head and whispered, so low as hardly to be audible: "It is all my fault—all my fault!"

"No, it is mine," she replied deliberately; "for I am not able to love even unto forgiveness, and unto forgetfulness of self."

He rose. What he had heard humbled him exceedingly, all the more because he felt how ill he had treated the pale sick girl before him. He drank the cup of shame and humiliation to the dregs. Oh, what nobility shone in her eyes!—It was too much for him. He bowed to her from a distance, and turned to go.

She called him back very earnestly by his name. He stopped and faced her. She reached out her hand to his, saying quickly: "Give me your hand. This parting is not for ever; we shall meet again."

Seizing her hand, he kissed it fervently.

"With all my heart," she said, "I wish you may be happy —perfectly happy."

"Thanks, thanks," he returned, scarce able to get the

words out; silence was forced upon him. He had intended to wish her the same, but he could not. In the grip of the insane desire that had seized upon him in that instant, he feared to fall on his knees before her, to print his kisses on those pallid lips, and to press her to his heart.

So he only kissed her hand once more and hurried away.

Anne, entirely exhausted, fell back in her chair. The wounds in her soul had all opened afresh; and that dying love of hers, reviving for a moment, filled her heart with anguish and her eyes with tears. She wept long and very bitterly, but somehow in harmony with the music she heard, which now had grown more plaintive and mournful, fainter and fainter, and its strains resounded through the silent room like the echoes of muffled cries.

CHAPTER XXII

AT the end of autumn in that year, the wedding of Boroviecki with Mada Müller took place. Together they walked from the altar down the long aisle, splendidly carpeted and forming on either side an avenue with palms and lighted candelabra. Outside these, crowds of people were surging like a sea. The church was literally crammed.

With serene and lofty bearing, Boroviecki walked along, his eyes sweeping the lines of acquaintances who smiled on him; but he saw nobody, and felt nothing but mortal boredom—wearied with the length of the ceremony and the purse-proud, ostentatious pomp of the whole affair. Amongst those of his acquaintances who had not been invited to the wedding, no one came to offer his congratulations outside the church; for no one had the audacity to break through the cordon that surrounded him with millions of money—the garland of richly dressed and bediamonded ladies, with their footmen in glowing liveries standing ready to hand them their wraps in the porch.

He got into the carriage with Mada, and drove off before anybody else. Mada was weeping tears of joy and bliss. Coyly, yet with blood aflame and nerves all aquiver, she nestled close to Charles—her own Charles now!

He, however, not in the least aware of the state she was in, looked out of the carriage window over the heads of the swarming crowds, over the house roofs, at the tall smoke-plumed chimneys and at the factories, loud with the din of work. And he thought, with a return on himself and the deed done that day: "Now my wedding is a fact; now I am the master of millions; now I am on the threshold of the

felicity I have dreamed." Slowly he ruminated over those thoughts, contemplating the mental pictures they evoked. And he felt with surprise that they gave him no sort of satisfaction, and left him cold, dry, unconcerned, indifferent, a prey to weariness and lassitude.

"Charles!" Mada whispered, raising her flushed face and her china-blue eyes to his.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"I am so happy. Oh, so happy!" she said shyly, resting her head upon his shoulder, and putting up her face and parted lips, eager for a kiss; but she shrank back instantly, for the crowds in the streets could see her.

He pressed her hand in a close grip, and no more was said.

The whole of the street leading to Müller's factory was thronged with workmen, who, clad in holiday attire, lined up on either side to let the carriage pass, and thundered enthusiastic greetings as they went by. At the end of the lines, just before the entrance to the yard, there stood an enormous triumphal arch, festooned with coloured draperies, adorned with emblems of labour, and bearing at its summit a huge transparency, with electric lights forming the word *Welcome!* Within the gate the lines of workmen stretched on through all the courtyards and the vast garden, as far as the palace itself.

The journey had taken so much time that, when they entered, they found all the guests had already arrived. Of these the great majority were Germans, the Poles present forming but an insignificant minority.

Müller had done everything that a Lodz millionaire should do on so great an occasion. The carpets, the furniture, the plate, and the floral and other decorations were simply astounding, for the palace had been taken in hand by Berlin upholsterers. For Müller, the day was really a great festival. He was giving his only daughter in marriage, and getting for his assistant a son-in-law. No wonder, then, that his round red face shone radiant with satisfaction. He offered his best cigars to each of his guests, slapped Charles

upon the back, pelted him with coarse jokes, tapped him on the knee, and was continually pressing him to taste of the delicacies set out in the refreshment room. At intervals he would pounce on one of the company and proudly show him all the best apartments.

"Mr. Kurovski, look around; this palace is where our children are to live. A grand place, isn't it?"

Kurovski agreed and listened with indulgent amenity while Müller went over the complete list of his furnishing expenses. Then he slipped away to Mrs. Moritz Welt, formerly Mela Grünspan, who was in one of the *salons*—a queen surrounded by her court of young men.

He remained for some time near her, attentive to her sparkling conversation, her artificial laughter, her affected postures as she walked to and fro; and at last withdrew in amazement. She had altered past recognition.

"Why, what have you done to your wife?" he asked of Moritz.

"Ah, you find her changed?"

"Into quite another person."

"That's all my doing. Now she's really a fine woman, is she not?" he said, settling his glasses.

Kurovski made no reply. He was observing Charles, who seemed but very indifferently to relish his part of a son-in-law. He was strolling about, uninterested, weary; inclined to slight his wife's family and those of all the factory-owners, and going over to chat with Max Baum, and even with Welt—with whom he was now reconciled—rather than with any of them.

"Well," Kurovski remarked to him, "it seems we have all four of us entered the Promised Land."

"If that means getting millions, we have. You are well on the way to them, Moritz is sure they'll be his, and Max is bound to earn them—unless indeed Vilchek manages to snatch them away."

"Talking of me?" cried Stanley Vilchek, drawing near. As Max's partner, he had now a sure footing in society, and could afford to give the go-by to his former associates. Which

he did, elbowing his way forward by dint of money and swagger.

"We were just saying," Kurovski replied with a laugh, "that Max is in a fair way to make his fortune, if you don't snap it up from under his nose."

"If such a thing could be done!" he murmured, licking his lips like a dog before a full plate, and then went off to pay court to a certain Miss Knaabe, ugly, vulgar, but possessed of a fortune of about two hundred thousand roubles.

Murray was sitting beside her, giving himself such ridiculous airs and paying her such funny compliments that she roared with laughter.

An orchestra had been stationed in the largest *salon* on a high platform, superbly decorated with red cotton flannel, made to imitate velvet; it now struck up the opening bars of a waltz. At the sounds, the insignificant factory officials, who had been invited only in order to enliven the party, streamed out of the refreshment room and other apartments curtained off from the great *salon*, and proceeded to dance.

Charles was meanwhile strolling about by himself in the various *salons*, flooded with light and resplendent with gorgeous finery. The invited guests were quite lost in the vastness of the immense apartments. From every corner and from amid those opulent draperies, dullness and vacuity peeped forth to mock them. He felt a great longing to get away, to lock himself up in his rooms, or to go, as he was formerly wont to do, along with Max and Moritz to some tavern or other and drink beer and talk and forget everything in the world! Such was his secret wish. But he had to do the honours of the house, and see that his beloved father-in-law should, so far as in him lay, be properly diverted. He had to converse, to smile, to pay the ladies compliments, and even talk to Mada now and then, and give orders besides to the servants, a function which no one else was able to undertake.

His mother-in-law was creeping about, hiding in corners, dressed in a magnificent silk gown that put her to shame, for she did not know what to do with herself. All this splen-

dour, and the many faces she now saw for the first time, frightened her so much that she glided from chamber to chamber, no one taking the least notice of her. Wilhelm was most of the time in the refreshment room, tippling with his friends, and embracing Charles whenever he saw him, having conceived for him a rare and ardent affection. As to Mada, she was so enraptured, so ecstatically happy, that she could see nothing and nobody but her husband, whom she sought for everywhere, and, when she found him, wearied with fond caresses.

At midnight Boroviecki felt so worn out that he spoke to Yaskulski, all dressed up for the occasion, who acted as master of the ceremonies. "You may as well tell them to give supper a bit earlier; we are all bored past endurance."

"Supper cannot be given before the appointed hour," he replied gravely, more than a little tipsy by this time, though he bore himself with stiff stateliness, twirled his moustache, and looked down on the millionaires. "Those German dogs!" he muttered, though at the same time serving them obsequiously.

At last, supper was served in the great dining-hall, and the festive board groaned under the burden of plate and of flowers and of crystal glasses. Charles sat beside his bride, who was as red as a peony. He listened patiently to the speeches made, and the toasts drunk, and the broad jests rapped out in his honour.

Towards the end of the banquet, when the guests had grown merry and were in the high glee which is imparted by champagne, he was compelled to kiss and embrace all those fat tradesmen, exuding grease at every pore, who ate like wolves and drank like fishes. And afterwards, when the rite of putting the married women's cap on the bride's head had been performed, he was set upon by the whole crew of cousins and aunts, now of his family.

It was excruciating, and his head had begun to ache; so, as soon as ever he could, he slipped away from their loving affectionate claws, and took refuge in the conservatory, there to cool himself and rub his face clean from the traces which

their kisses had left. But here, too, he had no luck. Scarcely had he taken a seat on a sofa there, screened off by verdant shrubs, when several people belonging to or owners of factories came in and modestly hid themselves amid the greenery. And, as a climax, in rushed Müller senior, and mournfully cast his too abundant libations on a beautiful bed of flowering cineraria, that gleamed like gems in the lamplight.

Boroviecki made a hasty exit. But on coming to the banqueting-hall, now filled exclusively by footmen, he happened upon a very different scene. Matthew, completely drunk, was having words with Mrs. Müller, who, though appalled by his threatening mien, had timidly ordered the remains of the banquet and the unemptied bottles of wine to be stowed away in the side-board.

"Such a thing! (hic!)—Madam!—Another pair of shoes! It's our wedding-day—our feast!—We are married!—We shan't give either to eat or to drink to the Germans (hic!)—madam!"

Here he beat the table with his fist and pointed to the door.

"You, madam (hic!)—go to bed; we'll see to the wine—I'll take a drop—so will the lads—it's our wedding-day—our great feast.—Servants, pour out the wine—obey Mr. Matthew!—If not—smash your faces—and there you are.—All right—cholera and beetroots!—Here's to master—and out of doors with the others!"

Terrified, Mrs. Müller ran out to look for Charles, while Matthew threw himself back in an arm-chair, and went on incoherently, as he thumped with his fist on the table. "Our wedding it is (hic!)—Mr. Director! We've got the factory, got the wife—got the palace too!—And to hell (hic!) with the Germans!—If not, smash their faces—feet in the gutter—rout 'em out—make a clean sweep of 'em—cholera and beetroots!"

And afterwards?

Afterwards weeks, months, years elapsed, all consigned to

oblivion—gliding past as quietly as, with inexorable succession, fresh spring days come, fresh births, fresh deaths; as quietly as life's thread is spun with its three strands—yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. Since Boroviecki's wedding, however, this lapse of years had brought about many a change amongst our old acquaintances.

More than ever, Lodz was now living in its own vertiginous way, throbbing feverishly and expanding likewise, building in hot haste, astonishingly and perpetually mighty in its concentrated force, which went on like an irresistible torrent, spreading over those fields where not so long since corn had grown and kine had grazed, and where now whole streets of new houses and factories, all alive with business and sweating and swindling, had arisen in their stead. The town resembled a tremendous whirlpool, wherein men, mills, stuffs, passions, millionaires and paupers, revellers and starving folk, revolved with frantic swiftness to the roar of machinery, of lust, of hunger, of hatred; to the noise of the conflict of all men against all men and all things. All rushed onward with the impetus of elementary forces let loose—onward over dead men and factories in ruins—to possess those millions that seemed springing forth from every inch of ground in that Promised Land.

Kurovski was making his fortune at full speed; Max Baum and Stanley Vilchek were now a powerful firm, making shoddy goods and successfully underselling the firm of Grünspan, Welt, & Grosman. Welt, being a partner in that firm, never drove out but in his own coach, and knew no one in the street unless he had half a million of money.

The Bucholc firm, formerly managed by Charles, still continued to be the first in Lodz. In his competition with it Shaya Mendelsohn had not succeeded. He had again suffered from a conflagration, which gave him the means of enlarging the works and employing two thousand more men. Latterly he had become an out-and-out philanthropist, sweating his employees to the uttermost limit, and with the profits building them a splendid hospital, and a home as well for cripples and men no longer able to work.

Grosglik still continued to pick pockets legally, and with all the more industrious ardour after marrying his daughter Mary to a certain count, ruined in health and estate by fast living, whom he had therefore both to nurse and to maintain.

Travinski, who by dint of perseverance and patient work had managed to retrieve his former losses, had been for a couple of years enjoying an excellent reputation, and his firm was now highly respected.

Old Müller had given up his factory to Boroviecki, and left Lodz altogether, living with Mrs. Müller at his son's, for whom he had bought landed property. Wilhelm, who had fallen a victim to the disease of snobbery, was about to marry a countess, wrote his name De Meller, dressed his servants in livery to attend him when on a visit to Lodz, and quartered the armorial bearings of his future wife with those of Boroviecki! With the factory he had nothing to do but to take his share in the enormous sums it brought in.

Boroviecki was at present sole master of the huge concern. During those few years he had developed it immensely, reformed the whole system of weaving flannelette, raised his products to the highest degree of perfection, built new departments, and discovered new markets for his surplus textiles; he was unceasingly pressing forward.

The four years which had gone by since his marriage with Mada and his succession to the factory had been years of simply superhuman activity. Rising at six, he used to go to bed at midnight; never took a trip, never any enjoyment, never had a taste of the life which his millions had put into his grasp—in fact he could scarcely be said to live at all. His life was work. Plunged in the vortex of affairs as he was, his factory, together with the disposition of the floods of gold it produced, absorbed all his thoughts, all his time, all his strength—sucked him dry—a devil-fish with a thousand tentacles about him.

He had them then at last, those millions he had so hankered after; he was now handling them every day, living in their midst, haunted by them always and everywhere. But

this state of overwork, lasting for so many years, had exhausted his body, although the heaps of money amassed gave him no satisfaction; quite the contrary. Every day he felt more weary, more indifferent, more dejected. This weariness was now acting with greater force upon him; he now began to realize how ill things went with him, how very lonely he was.

Mada had been quite a good wife to him, and a still better wet-nurse and attendant on his son. In that respect she was of great service, but could be nothing else, and did not even dream of being anything else. To her he was a sort of fetish, adored from afar, but not to be approached unless he showed himself not unwilling; she durst not so much as speak to him if not sure that he wanted her to speak. And he—well, he let her worship and fall down before him, at times flinging her a kind word or a pleasant smile in reward. As to any real tenderness, any true emotion of the heart, these were of rare occurrence.

Never had he had any friends, but always plenty of acquaintances—men well-disposed towards him, and his former fellow workers. Now, however, in proportion as his greatness waxed, they all slunk away, lost in the mass of mere humanity, separated and cut off from him by the impassable barrier of his millions. Nor did he associate with the millionaires themselves. He had too little time in the first place; and then he despised them too heartily, and there was too much antagonism between him and them, his competitors and rivals.

There were only a few of his intimates with whom social relations were possible. But he shunned Kurovski, who had been set against him by his treatment of Anne, and took every opportunity to wound him. He also felt for Moritz Welt a dislike too strong for cordial relations. Neither could he get on with Max Baum, though they often met, and Max was even godfather to his boy. There was no warmth of friendship between them; no affection, but only the good-fellowship of old days. Like Kurovski, Max bore a grudge against him; he too could not forget his behaviour towards Anne.

So Boroviecki now was ever more and more a prey to loneliness and the terrible void around him, a void that was filled neither by the millions which he gained, nor by the health-destroying work which he did. And now at last his soul began to suffer the direful pangs of spiritual starvation. He did not indeed as yet clearly realize what the matter with him was. All he knew was that everything wearied him—factories, business enterprises, people, money-making —everything.

Such were his thoughts one day when going round to visit his works. The gigantic walls of the great edifice were shaking with the din of strenuous labour within them. He walked through every department, aloof, gloomy, speaking to no one, and mechanically made his way on, gazing vacantly at the machinery in action, at the men working with unflagging industry, and at the windows flooded with spring sunlight. Then he took the elevator to the drying-room, where tissues were lying in millions of metres, on long tables, on the floor, or piled on tiny trucks. He passed along, treading upon them with a carelessness of which he was but partially conscious, and stood at length at the window-sill, from which streaks of corn-land were visible, with a fringe of forest at the horizon. He looked out at that bright sunny April day, brimming over with light and joy and warmth, at the delicate green of the grass, at the pellucid hazy clouds far away in the depths of a pale-blue sky.

Presently, driven by a dull, indefinite longing, he left the chamber, and walked through one pavilion after another, from section to section; through all the infernal whirring, humming, roaring sounds and all the evil smells in the stifling, heated air he walked, full of the thought that everything there was his property—the kingdom of his dreams. Yes, they had all been realized! How bitterly he smiled, as his mind went back to the past and his illusions of former days! Illusions they were, since he had so fondly believed that the possession of millions would fill his soul with marvellous and ecstatic bliss.

"And what have they given me?" was now his thought.

Oh! certainly, this his kingdom had brought him something —but what? Nothing but lassitude, weariness of life!

No, they had also brought him this ravenous craving of his soul, and this yearning, so vague, yet so potent and so painful, that now gripped his heart. And alas!—there—away outside the windows of his dyeing-room, in which he was now sitting, spring was coming over the fields; and all was so beautifully bright, and the sonorous clamour of children was resounding, and the sparrows chirruped merrily, and wreaths of rosy smoke ascended on high! There all was so cheerful, so gay, so full of the joy of reviving nature, that he would fain be there himself, to cry out and sing and roll on the grass and float among the clouds and blow with the breezes and wave in the air with the sunlit trees, and live—live—live with his whole heart, his whole mind, while every fibre of his being thrilled with ecstasy!

"What's to come now?" he thought, as he listened to the roar of his factory. To this question he found no answer. "This is what I wanted and longed for; and I have got it!" he said to himself, looking at the red walls of that factory of his, with all the hatred of a slave for his enslaver—that detested tyrant who was peeping merrily out of those thousand windows, working away so furiously that all his pulses throbbed, while he chanted, with the many voices of the deep-toned engines, his great hymn to Mammon!

Having enough of the factory, he went down to his office. Men of business, tradesmen, men seeking work, men with a thousand other demands on his time, thronged his antechamber and waited impatiently for his appearance; but he slipped out by a side door, and leisurely strolled into town.

He noticed no one, tortured as he was within by a frightful sense of lassitude and of spiritual starvation. The whole town was flooded with sunlight and seething with movement and uproar. All the factories, like so many strongholds, were manned with workers in full activity. From every street, every house, every hovel, and even from the fields outside, the sounds of work came to his ears, with the clamour of

machinery, the confused noises of fierce struggling, the pantings of those who fought, the pæans of those who conquered.

All that—oh, how tired it made him feel! He threw a glance of unspeakable contempt at Baron Meyer, who, lolling back in his magnificent equipage, was driving along, bloated with riches and looking for all the world like a rosy-gilled fatted hog! "A beast, for which the acme of happiness is to have his sty—and his title-deeds!—And why can I not make the same use of my riches as he does of his? Yet," he thought, "men like him live in entire satisfaction."

Alas! to enjoy life after the fashion of the Lodzian millionaires was not in him. What pleasure, indeed, could such a life procure him? He cared nothing for the magnificence which surrounded him; and the mere ostentatious show of wealth was both undesired and needless.

Why, then, should he go on making millions? His expenditure could never rise to the height of what his income gave. Had he not been a bondsman to those millions long enough? Had they not taken enough strength and life out of him already? Had he not long enough worn their golden fetters?

Still more lamentable did his position appear presently, as he looked forward into the future, and the long years of weary labour which lay before him.

On and on he walked, wandering aimlessly, until he happened to reach Helenovski Park. Entering, he traversed the avenues, still damp after a rain, viewing with interest the sprouting blades of grass and the pale-green leaves, gently trembling in the cool, though sun-soaked air. The avenues were deserted, except for a few sparrows chirping there, and some crows hopping about.

He walked till he was quite tired, with fierce pertinacity, but somehow found himself continually back in the alleys where he had trysted with Lucy. "Lucy!—Emma!" he said, half aloud, with something like regret for them, and looked round him on the solitary park.

Bitter it was to know that here no one expected him, or would come to meet him; that he was quite alone. "How

short a lapse of time—and yet how long!" Ay, once upon a time he had indeed loved—loved passionately, madly! And now?

Now, instead of that youth of his, with all its tempests, he had his millions—and was weary of them! His lips curled in contempt—contempt of himself, scorn of his present state. And he walked on.

He went all round the park, and nearing the entrance on his return, met a long procession of little girls coming in, with two ladies following in the rear. He stepped aside, gave a cursory glance——

"Anne!"

He raised his hat as instinctively as the words burst from his lips.

Yes, is was she. Instantly she came forward to him with outstretched hands.

"It is so long, so very long since I saw you last!" she exclaimed, with a look of joy.

He kissed her hand and gazed at her in amazement. Yes, it was Anne, the very Anne of those days of old in Kurov; but so young, so beautiful, so full of strength and fascinating charm, and of grace, equally simple and high-born!

"Let us walk along after the little ones, if you have any leisure."

"But what is this band of children?" he asked her.

"They belong to my Home."

"Your Home?"

"I could not remain idle. And this work has given me such great delight that I am now trying for leave to found another such Home."

"Can you feel any delight in caring for those little ones?"

"Any delight? Perfect happiness rather; I am fulfilling a duty, and doing good, though on a very small scale.—And you—are you satisfied?" she inquired in a lower tone. Her voice trembled, as her eyes swiftly perused his features—so worn, so sickly-looking!

"I am, I am!—Very much so," he replied with a quick,

husky utterance, for his heart was beating so violently that he could hardly breathe.

They went on in silence, the little girls going round the pond, and striking up some song for children with their shrill treble voices, sounding partly like the chink of gold and partly like the rustling of leaves on grass.

"You look so very poorly," she said, her eyelids half-closed to hide her deep compassion from him, as with sisterly love and sorrow she noted his hollow eyes, his protruding cheek-bones, and the deep furrows on his face, and the sprinkling of grey about his temples.

"Pray do not grieve for me. I have what I wanted to have. I wanted millions, I have them—if they are insufficient for my life, that's my own fault. Yes, it is my own fault if I have succeeded in getting everything except happiness. And if I am starving for it now, it serves me right."

Here he stopped short, for a torrent of bitterness was surging up in his heart; he saw the tears trickling down her cheeks, and her lips quivering with the attempt to conceal her pain. At the sight of her tears he could say no more; it pierced his heart with a fearful pang, and he could only shake hands with her and hurry away, lest he should tell her all that was on his mind.

"Out of town, and as fast as you can!" he shouted, leaping into a cab. From head to foot he was trembling with the emotion aroused in him by the dreamy memories surging up from the dark places of his brain, from the abysmal depths of his heart, to form pictures of such beauty and so radiant with joy that he struggled with all the power of his will to retain them, to satisfy the desires of his hungry soul, and so forget the present and the misery that was always before him.

It was of no avail; for, on the screen of consciousness, continually and with the swiftness of lightning, there would arise other pictures, other memories—memories of all the wrongs he had inflicted on Anne, of all his sins against her love. He sat dazed, with half-closed eyes, almost as one

dead, though all the time using his utmost endeavours to silence that great cry of his soul which echoed through all his being, to control his heart that had waked up at her sight, and all those yearnings after happiness which had started up in him, full of irresistible strength.

"I am rightly served—most rightly served!" he repeated to himself at times, with savage pleasure, wallowing in his own torments and the recognition of the state he was in and of the evil he had done. At length he mastered himself, and got the better of his thoughts. But it was a bitter victory, which had cost him such extremity of effort that he would not go home, but drove to his office, locked himself in, sent away Matthew, who had been there in attendance, and remained quite alone.

"Oh, mine has been a wasted life!" he said presently, starting up from the ottoman he had sat down upon. The thought had worked its way out of the dark recesses of his brain, rent him with tormenting certitude, and cast a dazzling but excruciating ray into his very soul.

He peered about the dusky room, as if he had suddenly come to himself, and saw all things in a new light.

"And why wasted?" he asked himself. And, opening the window, he set himself to reflect.

The street noises sounded fainter and fainter as the town sank to rest in that pleasant night of spring. It was a greenish darkness, save for the twinkling gleams of starlight, and enveloped all the town as in a winding-sheet. From his window the huge bulk of the town was seen, dimly spread out far and wide. Here and there a few lights were visible in those factories that worked by night; and their hum, wafted to his ears by the wind, came like the dull leafy rustling of a forest.

"Why wasted?" he asked himself once again, nerving himself with might and main to the impending struggle with his soul; for it began to make reply with the reminiscences of all his past, weaving together all those threads of memory that had fallen into oblivion, but now had risen again and were present. He resisted, he fought them, but unavail-

ingly. He was compelled to see them; compelled, too, to hear all the voices of the past. Submitting to the inevitable, he looked down into himself with terrible and sorrowful interest. He reviewed his past and present life—forty years all told—which, like a thread dangling from the spindle of time, let its strands float loose before him; and he could look into each of them. And into each of them did he look.

The town slumbered in deep shadow, stretched over the ground like an octopus with factories for tentacles; the far-off widely scattered electric suns—a flock of cranes with heads of fire—looked out into the night with sparkling eyes, and watched over the rest of that sleeping Moloch of a town.

"Well, well. After all, I am what I am—what I had to be," he said, with a note of haughty challenge in his voice. But he could not gag his conscience, which by this time was thoroughly awakened, nor still the cries of his beliefs, long set at naught, of his ideals, long forsworn, of his life itself, long contaminated by self-seeking. All these cried aloud within him: "Thou hast lived for thyself alone, thou hast trampled everything down to please thy vanity, to satisfy thy pride, and to become a man of millions!"

"Quite true. Yes, I have sacrificed all things to my career —*to my career!*" He repeated the words, like a self-inflicted blow in the face; he was overwhelmed with a flood of shame and humiliation.

All had indeed been sacrificed—and to what end? To the raking together of a heap of useless money! He had no friend, no peace, no pleasure, no happiness, no desire even to live; nothing. Nothing!

"Man cannot live for himself alone; if he does, he must needs be unhappy." This saying he had heard before, and knew well, but he had never yet realized its profound truth.

"That is why I have thrown away my own happiness," he thought. Then, remembering his interview with Anne, and acting upon a sudden impulse, he wrote her a long letter, asking for the information he required, being about to found a home for his working-people's children.

Then he resumed his meditations, which now concerned

the ways and means of setting himself free, and finding some aim in life to occupy the long, long days of the future before him, the very anticipation of which filled him with dismay. Slowly the hours glided by; the town slept with the uneasy sleep of a fevered man. Through the gathering mists of the night, embroidered with dots of light in patterns, there passed now and again a vague uneasy palpitation, or a long, low moan, as of pain—perhaps a moan from the tired engines, the exhausted workmen, or the perishing trees?

Again there would come a shriek from the other end of some empty street, quavering through the air, and dying away into silence. Or an inexplicable thrill, made up of mysterious lights and voices and sobs and peals of laughter—the whole ascending and descending scale of life, past and future, echoing through the town like dreams dreamed and murmured by its walls, by its mist-enshrouded trees, and by the used-up, over-handled earth.

And then from time to time there would prevail a stillness so deep, so awful, that one could feel therein the beats of the pulses of that dormant Titan who lay stretched upon the ground like a child on its mother's breast.

But far away, outside the city, in the fields around the "Promised Land," and in the unknown depths of the night, there was always a stir and a seething of unrest—murmurs of voices, sounds of rattling and clattering and rumbling, and outbursts of laughter, of sobbing, of curses——

Along every road, shining with the pools left by the spring rains and leading to this Promised Land from every quarter of the globe; on every by-way and path through the green fields and the orchards in blossom; through woods filled with the fragrance of the young spring birch-trees; through ruined villages and round impassable morasses, there were coming troops of people, hundreds of creaking wagons, thousands of railway carriages rushing on; and countless sighs were breathed, countless burning glances darted through the gloom towards this Promised Land, in ardent longing to catch sight of it as soon as it appeared.

From many a remote plain, from uplands and from de-

caying villages, from the great metropolis and from the tiniest townships; from straw-thatched cottages and from lordly mansions; from the highest ranks of life and from the lowest, men were coming in endless procession to the Promised Land. They came to fertilize it with their blood—to pour out their strength and youth and health—their freedom, hopes, and sufferings, their brains, and work, their faith and dreams.

To satiate this Promised Land—or rather this octopus of a town—country-sides were unpeopled, forests laid waste; the earth was despoiled of its treasures; men and women were born to no other end. And it sucked everything up into itself, its all-devouring maw swallowed men and things indiscriminately, and took possession both of earth and sky, giving to some few a heap of useless millions, and to the many, arduous work and starvation wages!

Thinking over all this, Charles paced the room, pausing to gaze often and long into the night and over the town before him. The wan, pallid dawn was now glimmering in the east; the morning sky passed slowly to an emerald tint; under the eaves of the conservatory, swallows were beginning to twitter a little, and the trees waved in the fresh cool air of day-break. It soon grew brighter; soon the nearest white zinc roofs became visible through the mist which still enveloped them; and presently old Baum's ruined factory stood out clearly, with its broken walls and windows and fallen chimneys, and appeared out of the mist—a weird skeleton, broken all to pieces, blackened, scarred, dismal.

Boroviecki was quite calm now. He had found his way, and knew what the purpose of all his future life was to be. He had broken away, turned his back upon the self of all his past, and now felt himself a new man, melancholy indeed, but strong and determined to fight the good fight.

He was extremely pale. During that single night he had grown visibly older. The furrow across his forehead had deepened and his face bore the mark of dogged determination, which bitter experience had graven upon it.

"Happiness is out of the question for me; but I will make others happy," he said with cool deliberation. And his eyes, full of unconquerable resolution, embraced the whole town, as yet sound asleep, and the spaces beyond, invisible, but on the point of looming out of the darkness.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set (on the Linotype) in Elzevir No. 3, a French Old Style. For the modern revival of this excellent face we are indebted to Gustave Mayeur of Paris, who reproduced it in 1878, basing his designs, he says, on types used in a book which was printed by the Elzevirs at Leyden in 1634. The Elzevir family held a distinguished position as printers and publishers for more than a century, their best work appearing between about 1590 and 1680. Although the Elzevirs were not themselves type founders, they utilized the services of the best type designers of their time, notably Van Dijk, Garamond, and Sanlecque. Many of their books were small, or, as we should say now, "pocket" editions, of the classics, and for these volumes they developed a type face which is open and readable but relatively narrow in body, although in no sense condensed, thus permitting a large amount of copy to be set in limited space without impairing legibility.

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